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PRACTICAL  
DISCOURSES,  
UPON THE  
DIVINITY  
AND  
Wonderful Works of JESUS  
CHRIST.

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VOL II.

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BY THE REV. JOSEPH REEVE.

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PRACTICAL  
DISCOURSES

UPON THE DIVINITY AND

Wonderful Works of Jesus  
Christ.

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DISCOURSE I.

UPON THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

*He thought it no robbery to be himself-equal  
to God. Philippians c. 2. v. vi.*

THE divinity of Jesus Christ is the foundation, on which the Christian system of religion solely rests. Besides the authority of divine revelation this doctrine has the antiquity of ages and the consent of nations for its support. Arius indeed, an intriguing priest of Alexandria, in the fourth century rose up in opposition to this

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B

doctrine



doctrine with great scandal to the faithful, and openly attempted to introduce a new system of his own. His attempt was no less bold, than impious in the eyes of all orthodox believers. His positions however caught the idle curiosity of some and gained the attention of others. The evil, like a canker, spread by degrees, and corrupted the faith of many. Warm disputes consequently arose, the peace of the Church was disturbed and the State alarmed. With a view of stopping the growing evil the Bishops were summoned from every part of Christendom to a general council,\* which was held at Nice the capital of Bithynia. There the principles of primitive belief were diligently and candidly discussed, the doctrine of Arius was declared to be heretical, and the consubstantiality of the Son with the eternal Father was solemnly defined.

This solemn definition of the Church assembled in its Pastors, altho' it gave a mortal wound to the Arian heresy, did not

\* An. 325.

not put an end to the Arian faction. For nothing is perhaps so flattering to human vanity, or so congenial with the dictates of a corrupt heart, as to head a party against lawful authority. Arianism had for many years great names and powerful numbers for its support, till after many convulsive struggles it wasted away by degrees, and sunk at last forgotten by the world into its original obscurity. There had it rested to the end of time, if a licentious spirit of speaking and writing in contempt of all authority had not attempted in these latter days to draw forth the monster into light again under another shape, not less formidable than hideous.

Unitarianism, as it is called, under the delusive and flimsy disguise of doing honour to the one, supreme and eternal God, has dared to insult, to attack and deny the divine nature of his only begotten Son, as well as of his holy Spirit. This is to impugn God in his very essence; this is to contradict the wonderful fecundity of his divine nature

without understanding it; in a word it is to efface the idea of incomprehensible perfection from the supreme Being. Because the human mind is too narrow to comprehend the manner how the Father communicates his whole nature and substance to the Son, so as to constitute a second Person, and how the Father and the Son concur in communicating the same indivisible nature to the holy Ghost, so as to constitute a third Person in the unity of the Godhead, shall man impotently presume to dispute the reality? Man undoubtedly feels within himself a capacity of thinking; but because he knows not how a thought is formed, will he therefore deny the existence of thought within him? Will, memory and understanding are three distinct faculties of the same individual soul. But after what manner the soul exercises those faculties, or how she produces her various operations of the mind, the philosopher is at a loss to tell. Would it then be wise in him to deny those operations, because he can  
neither



neither explain nor see, how they are formed? This likeness, which man bears within his soul, of the Divinity is but an imperfect likeness: it has however something in it too great for man to comprehend. Shall man then pretend to investigate the profound mysteries of God, and in his ignorance shall he dare to pronounce a Trinity of Persons in one divine nature to be impossible, because incomprehensible to his weak understanding? It is rational, it is just and wise to submit to God. Let man learn to think, and to speak with reverence of God: let him learn to hear and humbly to believe what God has been pleased to reveal of himself and of his adorable perfections. *There are Three, who give testimony in heaven*, says St. John,\* *the Father, the Word, and the holy Ghost, and these Three are One.* Three in Persons, One in nature. Whoever denies the Father and the Son, is an Antichrist, neither hath he the Father, who denies the Son. §



It is not my design to combat the arguments, on which the Unitarian pretends to ground his heterodox opinions. This has been done by an abler pen. My weak endeavour is to animate the piety of the faithful in the ancient belief of a fundamental article of the Christian religion, by briefly producing such testimonies, as bespeak the Divinity of Jesus Christ the author and the finisher of our faith.\* In these perillous times, when the spirit of licentiousness and infidelity is gone forth to spread anarchy and confusion through the Christian world, every effort to strengthen the weak, to confirm the doubtful, and to guard the unwary against the danger of seduction is seasonable and just.

In the very first age of Christianity Cerinthus of Asia Minor, a man equally corrupt in morals as in doctrine, began to dogmatise against the Divinity of Jesus Christ. The beloved disciple St. John was still living. At the request of the neighbouring

\* Heb. xii.

neighbouring Bishops he undertook to refute the heresy of the antichristian blasphemer. With this view he wrote his Epistles and Gospel about the end of the first century. In a stile truly noble and sublime the inspired Evangelist takes his eagle-flight, and soaring on the wings of the holy Spirit above all that is created, mounts to the very essence of God's eternal Word. "In the beginning, says he,\* was "the Word, and the Word was God. "This word was in the beginning with God. "For all things were made by him, and "without him was made nothing, that "has been made." The Word himself therefore was not made. Before any thing was, the Word was, else the things, that are, could not have been made by him. Before the beginning of all creatures the Word had in himself a being, from whom and by whom all creatures have received existence. Consequently the Word can be no creature; for he has no beginning. His existence is eternal. For in the beginning, that is, before the first date of time,

he was with God. He therefore is the divine, the eternal, the increated Word of God; he is God himself.

This is the Word, that was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us. \* But by being made man he underwent no change in his divine nature, nor did he cease to be what he always was, the splendour of his Father's glory, and the figure of his substance. § For altho' he took upon himself a new form by assuming the form of man, yet he lost nothing of the form of God, which he necessarily had before all ages. But in his bodily appearance he divested himself of all the marks of his divinity by taking the form of a servant: yet still being, as he had always been, in the form of God, he thought it no robbery, as St. Paul expresses it, † to be himself equal to God. For the form of God was essentially his own. The Apostle by his manner of associating the divine and human form of Jesus Christ in the same sentence seems clearly to evince, that as  
by

\* John 1.      § Heb. 1.      † Phil. 2.



by the latter he was truly man, so by the first he was truly God. We know, says St. John,\* that the Son of God is come, and *this is the true God and eternal life.*

That a God eternal, immense and infinite in all perfection should ever stoop so low as to become incarnate is a mystery far above the reach of human understanding. No philosophy, no learning of the ancients ever could discover it: without the light of divine revelation even the chosen people of God had never known it. Without the testimony of the inspired writings, and without the express declarations of the Prophets, who were sent by the most High to foretel the wonderful event for ages before it happened, the world had never been disposed to receive so divine a truth. The expiation of sin committed by man against God, and the satisfaction, that was requisite to repair the injury done to the divine honour by so heinous an offence, were of such a nature, as not to be effected by any thing less than God

VOL. II.                      B 5                      himself.

\* 1 Ep. c. v.



himself. For if the mediator of our peace had been only man, he himself would have stood in need of some other mediator to render his mediation acceptable, before he could have been either able to satisfy for the injury done by sin, or worthy to be heard in the reparation he offered for the atonement of sin. Therefore the character, which the holy Scripture gives of the promised Messiah, is more than human: it is supernatural and divine.

Adam had scarce sinned, but he was comforted with a promise from God himself, that his transgression should one day be repaired, and that the woman's offspring should hereafter crush the serpent's head.\* On this divine promise the ancient Patriarchs grounded their expectation of a Redeemer, who should take away the sins of the world. To confirm this promise, as the Scriptures testify, the Prophets in succeeding ages were inspired in the utterance of their oracles concerning Him. To perpetuate this promise to the world

\* Gen. iii.

world the Jewish nation was in a special manner chosen to be the depository and faithful guardian of those sacred volumes, in which the word of God is undoubtedly contained.

“ To us a Child is born, says Isaiah,\*  
 “ and a Son is given to us. His name  
 “ shall be called Wonderful, God, the  
 “ Mighty, the Father of the world to  
 “ come, the Prince of peace. For be-  
 “ hold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear  
 “ a Son, and his name shall be called Em-  
 “ manuel, § that is to say, God-with-us.”  
 “ Out of thee, O Bethlehem, shall He come  
 “ forth unto me, that is to be the Ruler  
 “ in Israel, says the Prophet Micah, ||  
 “ and his going forth is from the be-  
 “ ginning, from the days of eternity.”  
 Here, my Brethren, is expressly foretold  
 the birth of a wonderful Child, the Son  
 of a pure Virgin. He was to be brought  
 forth in the town of Bethlehem, and tho’  
 born in time is declared to have an  
 existence from the days of eternity. This

Child therefore is likewise God ; because none but God can exist from eternity. Isaiah styles him expressly God ; a God in human flesh dwelling with us, and bringing peace unto us, our powerful Mediator and Redeemer. Neither the reality nor the meaning of these Prophecies can be rationally questioned by any one, who admits the ancient Scripture. To determine when and in whom they have been fulfilled, we must consult the new. For conformably to Christian belief both the old and the new Testament have been equally dictated by the same unerring spirit of God.

In the reign of Augustus Cæsar, as we learn from St. Luke,\* Mary a Virgin of Nazareth in Judea, conceived by virtue of the holy Ghost, and in her chaste womb bore a Son without detriment to her Virginal integrity. At the end of nine months she brought him forth in the town of Bethlehem. Then by the Angels was first sung glory to God on high, and on earth  
peace

\* C. i.



peace to men of good-will. The Angels announced the new-born Child to the shepherds of the country under the title and character of SAVIOUR, who is Christ the Lord.\* Infidelity may affect to cavil at what it cannot comprehend, or even to deny what it never can disprove; but to sound reason and religion it will be always clear, that these prophecies relating to the Messiah are too well authenticated to be ever rationally denied, too explicit to be misunderstood, and too palpably verified in the Person of Jesus Christ not to be assented to. But to proceed, the Child on the eighth day after his birth solemnly received the sacred name of Jesus, as the Angel had said, when he related to his Virgin mother the miraculous manner of his conception. Soon after came three Kings from the east with presents to adore him. § They paid him the tribute of divine homage, and publicly professed their belief in his divinity. After this conformably to the Jewish custom he was carried

\* C. ii.

§ Mat. ii.



carried to the Temple of Jerusalem, where the venerable Simeon proclaimed him aloud to be the light of the nations, the glory and the resurrection of many in Israel.

These testimonies, my Brethren, are clear and decisive, they are sacred, they are sanctioned by the pen of inspired Evangelists. From his earliest youth Jesus chose to live in obscurity under a lowly roof at Nazareth,\* till he was about thirty years old, when he began to manifest himself to the public: then the most splendid evidence of his Divinity shone forth in greater lustre from every side. John the Baptist, greater than whom none had yet risen among the sons of men, declared himself not worthy even to untie the latchet of his shoe.† No sooner had John baptised him, than the heavens opened, and the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove descended and rested upon him, while a voice from the Father declared him to be his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. In his progress thro' the country the unclean spirits

\* Luke iii.

† Mark i.

spirits owned his power, and by the tongues of the possessed proclaimed him to be the Son of God, because they knew him to be the Christ, as St. Luke also witnesses. † On the top of Mount Thabor he appeared before three of his disciples in the shining figure of a glorified body, and the Father from the middle of the resplendent cloud, that overshadowed them, again proclaimed him to be his beloved Son, commanding all to hear him.

When God summoned Moses to appear before him on Mount Sinai,\* he treated with him as his servant and chosen minister to deliver his precepts to the people of Israel. Moses therefore received the law from God's own mouth, he carried it in his hands written on two tables of stone, † and presented it ministerially to the people for their observance. Jesus on Mount Thabor appear in a character infinitely superiour. He appears not as the servant or ministerial agent, but as the Son of God himself. Therefore to him no order is

† C. iv.

\* Exod. xix

† Exod. xxxii.

is directed, no precept given. He receives not, but gives the law, as being the One supreme with the eternal Father. Being the way,\* which all are to follow, as well as the truth, which all are to believe, Jesus speaks and delivers as from himself the words of eternal life.¶ Therefore hear ye him. Ipsum audite. Hence St. Mark† very forcibly observes, how astonished the people were at the manner of his expressing himself; for he was teaching them, not like the Scribes, but as one having authority.

From Thabor let us now turn to Mount Calvary. There thro' the clouds of humiliation and ignominy, that accompanied his sufferings we shall discover the brightest marks of divine power and glory beaming round him. At his sufferings all nature was deranged, and by her confusion at the time of his bitter agony testified his being the author of all her works. The sun withdrew his light, the trembling earth was wrapped in darkness at mid-day, the veil of the temple was rent in two, the rocks split

\* John xiv.

¶ C. vi.

† C. i.



split asunder, the graves opened and gave up their dead. The Centurion and Roman guards, who were witnesses of these striking prodigies, cried out from the force of conviction, *He was indeed the Son of God.\**

To atone for sin and to repair the injury done to God, Jesus was thus pleased in his human nature to submit to death. But death was soon compelled to yield the victory, and to own his glorious triumph. For on the third day he rose again by virtue of his own power. He rose not like Lazarus and those other mortals, who had been resuscitated by no inherent power of their own, and were soon to sink into the grave again. Jesus rose as the author and principle of life itself not to die again. *For he is the resurrection and the life.†* By the same power as he had risen from the dead, he also rose from the earth to heaven. || For he, who descended first into this lower world, says St. Paul, § is the same also, who ascended above all the heavens. He ascended without any  
external

\* Mat. xxvii. † John ii. || Acts i. § Eph. iv.



external aid to lift him up. No angel, no ministering spirit, no fiery chariot was there seen. But no sooner had he taken possession of the heavenly seat of bliss, which was due to his sacred humanity, than he dispatched two Angels to inform his disciples, still standing on the Mountain of Olives, that he should one day come in the same manner as they had seen him go. ¶

The second coming of Jesus Christ, as announced in the sacred text, will be in the last day, and it will be to judge all men, according to their works. *Jesus Christ will come in the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty, says St. John,\* and every eye shall see him. He is the first and the last, he is living and was dead.* This testimony, my Brethren, is clear, full, and conclusive in favour of the Divinity of Jesus Christ. He is here expressly stiled the beginning and the end of all things, and this must be God. To him every thing is subject, that exists in heaven, on earth, and in hell; before him all tribes  
of

¶ Acts i.

\* Rev. i.

of the earth shall stand, to receive sentence according to their works. Abraham, Moses, David, Elias, the Baptist, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Kings and Potentates of the universe, shall bend down and adore him as the absolute disposer of life and death, the immortal King of ages, the sovereign Lord of men and angels, the supreme Judge of every human creature. Even so be it.

Such, my Brethren, is the testimony, which the holy Scripture exhibits of Jesus Christ, from his incarnation to his second coming in the last day. The Prophets, the Evangelists, the Apostles, the eternal Father himself invariably concur in ascertaining his divinity, as we have briefly shown. Lost not only to religion but to shame must be the man, who should dare to deny so sacred, so authentic and so orthodox a truth: a truth, which the very name of Christianity has established beyond the possibility of a doubt. This doctrine no new upstart teacher has been ever able to invalidate by any argument he  
had

had to offer, nor against this truth has any bold declaimer ever presumed to dogmatise without being branded by the Church as a false teacher, and publicly noted as a subverter of the primitive Christian belief. Witness Cerinthus and Arius. For by no Christian can the doctrine of Christ's divinity be rejected without rejecting the only title he has to the name and character of a Christian. Who does not believe, says St. John,\* is already judged, because he does not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

To the irrefragable authorities already adduced let us add the authority of Jesus Christ himself. For even by them, who blaspheme his Divinity, Jesus Christ is held in singular repute for his doctrine, for his veracity and every moral virtue, as a darling friend of the most High, as a Prophet, as the Just one, powerful in word and work.

With Christians, Jews and Gentiles there appears never to have been any doubt,

\* C. iii.

doubt, but that Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary, who was proclaimed by Simeon, who was pointed out by the Baptist, who was crucified on Mount Calvary, who rose from the dead, and ascended triumphantly into heaven, publicly announced himself to the world as the only begotten Son of God, and the true Messiah, so often foretold, and so long expected by the Jewish nation. Tho' walking on earth in the form of man, he was at the same time in the form of God reigning above the highest heavens. "No one hath ascended into heaven, says he,\* but he that descended from heaven, the Son of man, who is in heaven. For so hath God loved the world, that he hath given his only begotten Son, that every one who believeth in him, should not perish, but may have everlasting life. He, that believeth in the Son, hath life everlasting. But he, that is incredulous to the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth in him." That Jesus spoke all this

\* John iii.



this of himself is most evident: but that no doubt might remain even with the most incredulous, he expressly declares himself in the following chapter\* to be the Messiah, who is called the Christ.

The divine character, which our blessed Lord asserted on every occasion, was so well understood by the Jewish doctors, that they affected to be highly offended at it, and hesitated not to accuse him of downright blasphemy on that account. Whom dost thou make thyself, † said they to him? Art thou greater than the Prophets? Art thou greater than our father Abraham? Amen, amen, I say unto you, before that Abraham was made, I AM, replied our Saviour. The asseveration is solemn, the expression is full to the point; it directly asserts his existence prior to his becoming man, it manifestly imports, that he is the uncreated and self-existing Deity before all ages. I am. The Jews marked its import, and immediately took up stones to stone him for it. Jesus said

\* C. iv.

† C. viii.

faid, many good works have I shewn you from my Father, and for which of those works is it, that you are about to stone me? It is not for any good work, replied the Jews, but for thy blasphemy that we stone thee: *because thou being a man, makest thyself God.\** To this our blessed Saviour thus answered. Because I have told you, that I am the Son of God, you say I blaspheme. But the testimony I give of myself is true.† For I know from whence I came and whither I am going. You know neither the one nor the other. I am not alone, but I and the Father, who sent me; and he also beareth testimony of me. If I have not wrought the works of my Father, do not believe me. But if I have, give at least credit to them, that you may know and believe,‖ that the Father is in me, and I in the Father. I AND THE FATHER ARE ONE.§ O Father, glorify me with thyself, with that glory which I had with thee, before that the world was.‡ I have made

\* C. x. v. 33. † C. viii. ‖ C. x. v. 38.  
§ C. xxx. ‡ C. xvii.

made known thy name to men. *All things, that are mine, are thine, and thine are mine.*

Now, of the Father nothing is so properly his, as his divinity. Consequently the divinity of the Father is the divinity of the Son, and therefore the Son, tho' really distinct in Person, is in nature with the Father the same one, indivisible and eternal God. To every well-disposed Christian, who is not either blinded by passion, or misled by party, these positive assertions of Jesus Christ in testimony of his divinity must appear fully satisfactory and decisive. There is however one declaration more, which by reason of the awful circumstances, that accompanied it, claims particular attention. Jesus standing before the tribunal of the Jews to give an account of his doctrine, was solemnly interrogated by the high Priest, If he were the Christ, the Son of the blessed God? \* Jesus answered, I AM. And hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

\* Mat. xxvi.

From hence, my Brethren, it is indisputably evinced, that Jesus Christ must either be what he professed himself to be, the eternal Son of God, or a false teacher. That Jesus was an impostor or false teacher even modern infidelity dares not say. No Christian can bear the shocking blasphemy. In an enlightened age and in a Christian country the assertion would be not only impious, but disgraceful to the profession of a Christian. That Jesus Christ is truly the only begotten Son of God, and even God himself, the great congregation of Christians, that is, the holy Catholic Church from its first foundation has universally believed and taught in every age and in every clime, and has consequently always paid him that supreme homage, which is only due to the supreme Being. In effect the whole life of Jesus Christ upon earth, his words, his precepts, his miracles, his promises, directly tend to establish his divinity, the priority of his existence in heaven, and his perfect equality with the Father from eternity.



1st. View the Sanctity of his character, which equally embraces every virtue in the highest perfection, view his conduct and the whole texture of his life, as drawn in the most eloquent and persuasive simplicity by the Evangelists. How humble was his demeanour, how blameless were his manners, how pure his doctrine, how holy his conversations, how innocent his life? To his most malicious enemies he bid defiance to prove him guilty of the slightest trespass.\* On the other hand, how noble were his sentiments, how greatly elevated above all, that is generally esteemed desirable by mortal men? By him all human applause, riches, honours, and enjoyments of a vain world were equally shunned and disavowed. But his goodness and singular charity for man appeared in all his works. How benevolent, how tender was his care for the afflicted and indigent? Witness the numberless sick, the lame, the blind, the deaf and dumb, who experienced the miraculous effects

\* John viii.

effects of his healing power, as he passed among them. How unremitting moreover and how ardent was his zeal for the salvation of souls, and the glory of his heavenly Father? To this were all his journies by day, his prayers and watchings by night, his discourses, his exhortations, his labours, his sufferings, his life and death wholly consecrated. No wonder the astonished multitudes should ask, who this extraordinary personage could be, when they saw the unclean spirits subject to his control,\* the winds and sea obey his command. Their minds not being enlightened with the beams of divine faith, no wonder they took him for an Elias, for a Jeremiah, or for some other Prophet. † But Jesus could be no Prophet, if he were not also what he so positively and so often said he was, the Son of God. For the truth then had not been in him. To what wretched contradictions do they therefore reduce themselves, who allow the one and deny the other? The truth of

\* Mark i.

† C viii.

both rests on the same ground, the infallible word of God himself.

2dly. To attest this truth and to confirm this truth Jesus wrought innumerable miracles in the face of the whole Jewish nation. Those miracles were proof against the keenest criticism, and were of such a nature, that they manifestly marked the hand of God, that wrought them. Go, said he\* on a certain occasion, report the things you have heard and seen: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise up again. Miracles like these are the silent but powerful language of the Almighty, the undoubted seal of the divinity in attestation of some important truth. To them Jesus not only made a solemn appeal§ in proof of his divine nature, but moreover declared,† that the Jews would not have sinned in refusing to believe his doctrine, if they had not seen his miracles. Those miracles would have convinced the heathens of Tyre and Sidon.

\* Luke vii.

§ John x.

† C. xv.

Sidon. || But they made no impression on the hearts of Bethsaida and Corazain; shall they have no better effect upon the minds of Christians? Has the meek and humble Jesus then in the opinion of an unbelieving Unitarian healed the sick and cast out devils, has he given sight to the blind and raised the dead to life for no other purpose, than to lead the witnesses of them into error, to establish a false worship, to seduce the Jewish nation from the worship of the true God, that he might set himself up as their idol in his stead? Has the one supreme, the all-perfect and eternal God then lent his miraculous powers to a pure man, in the language of infidelity, for the purpose of sanctifying an idolatrous religion throughout the world at the expense of his own honour and glory? Has the holy Spirit of God then inspired the Prophets to dispose the minds of men to believe a falsehood? Has the God of holiness then inspired his Evangelists to pen down an Evangelical ro-

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mance

|| Mat. xi.



mance for the practice and instruction of mankind? What contradiction! What impiety! What blasphemy! Its shafts are equally pointed against the Father and the Holy Ghost as against the Son. O Jesus, we believe with thy blessed Apostle,\* that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. In confirmation of this eternal truth we believe thou hast wrought thy miracles, the indelible characters of truth.

3dly. The precepts, imposed by Jesus Christ on all his followers, also manifestly speak his Divinity. The precept of loving our neighbour goes no farther than to love him as ourselves. But the precept of loving Jesus Christ goes infinitely higher: it obliges us to love him, as God, above all things. Whoever loves his father or mother, his wife or his children, or even his own life more than me, says he, § is not worthy of me, nor can he be my disciple. But he, that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it. We must therefore  
love

\* Mat. xvi.      § Mat. x. Luke xiv.

love him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength. Such, my Brethren, is the precept. If any man, says St. Paul, † love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema Maran-atha. Rather than forfeit the love we owe Jesus Christ, we must be ready to sacrifice every thing we hold most dear in life, our goods, our friends, our nearest kindred, the whole world, and even life itself. But could Jesus Christ our Lord demand so absolute a sacrifice of all our worldly goods, if he were not to us the cause and source of greater goods? Or could he so peremptorily claim our life, unless he were the author and disposer of it? No, my Brethren, such a claim is the prerogative of God alone, from whom we have received and hold our life, as well as every other blessing. Jesus Christ therefore is our God, to whom all honour and glory is for ever due.

4thly. The manner, in which Jesus Christ delivered his precepts, moreover

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manifests

† 1 Cor. xvi.

manifests his Divinity to men. When the Baptist, when Moses and the Prophets addressed the people, to whom they were sent, they always spoke as humble delegates in the name and by the authority of the most High. For they had no precepts to give, no doctrine to deliver, and no law to enforce, but that of God. But Jesus Christ, as St. Mark observes,\* taught as one having authority: the doctrine and the precepts he delivered, he declared to be his own,|| and in his own name he enjoined the observance of them to his followers: by his own authority he sent his Apostles to teach, and baptise all nations,‡ assuring them, that they, who should believe and be baptised, should in his name¶ work many miracles and in the end be saved. Such a language in the mouth of a pure man would have been the height of folly and presumption; but in the mouth of Jesus Christ it expresses a power inherent in him unlimited and divine. The Apostles went in obedience

\* C. i. || John xv. ‡ Mat. xxviii. ¶ Mark xvi.

dience to his commands, and preached every where, as the Evangelist asserts,† the Lord co-operating with them and confirming their doctrine by miracles ensuing. Now will any one, who calls himself a Christian, dare to assert, that Christ sent his Apostles to preach a false doctrine, and that the Lord by his miraculous powers co-operated with them in establishing a false religion? For false must be the religion they taught, if Christ Jesus be not God. He told them to enforce every article of the doctrines he had taught them,\* of which his Divinity was one. For he had said, *I am the Son of God, ‡ I and the Father are One.* ¶ Has the heathen World then in listening to the Apostles and embracing the doctrine of Jesus Christ embraced a false religion? Have the converted nations of the earth in adoring Jesus Christ exchanged one idolatrous worship for another? Has the great Christian body for these eighteen hundred years been mistaken in the divine object of their religious

VOL. II. C 5 adoration?

\* Mat. xxviii.

† Luke xxii.

¶ John x.



adoration? Or has a lewd Cerinthus, a perjured Arius, a turbulent Socinus, or a philosophical Unitarian, as he is pleased to stile himself, in these latter days been solely intrusted with the secrets of the Divinity? Has the great God of wisdom revealed to them only the fundamental point of true religion, and left the bright luminaries of his Church, the first teachers of Christianity, the Apostles and Evangelists in ignorance and error? No, my Brethren. That cannot be.

5thly. The promises made by Jesus Christ evince him to be God. For they are such as none but God could make. In the first place he promised his Apostles to send them, when he was gone, another Comforter,\* who proceeds from the Father, and who shall teach them all truth. Now what power could Jesus have over the Spirit of God, if it were not also his own Spirit, or if he himself were not likewise God? Yet he sent the holy Ghost, as he had said, and on the day of Pentecost  
ten

\* John xvi.

ten days after his ascension his sacred promise was fulfilled.† Secondly he promised them the gift of working miracles in his name;‡ a gift, which without rashness none but God can promise and effectually bestow. The Apostles accordingly not only received but displayed that gift in testimony of his divinity, as we read in their Acts. Thirdly, he promised them the power of remitting sins,¶ a power peculiar to God. But in consequence of this promise Jesus gave to his Apostles that singular power on the day of his resurrection, as St. John testifies. || Fourthly he promised, that upon St. Peter, as upon a rock\* he would build his Church, that is, a congregation of faithful believers, against which the gates of hell never should prevail. Such a promise, my Brethren, includes the power not only of converting the hearts of men and of drawing them by an unity of faith as it were into one fold, but likewise of securing to them the integrity of faith within that fold

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against

† Acts ii. ‡ Mark xvi. ¶ Mat. xviii. || C. xx. \* Mat. xvi.

against all the efforts, that Satan can make against it. This none but God could do, yet this Jesus Christ has done, and this promise he fulfilled, when he commissioned St. Peter to feed his Lambs and to feed his Sheep. † A visible congregation of Christian believers under the spiritual guidance of one Supreme Pastor then in consequence began, and under the same Supreme Head, the successor of St. Peter in spiritual matters, it has continued to the present day. This is the holy Catholic Church, the pillar and ground of truth. ‡ This Church from her very beginning has experienced the most violent assaults from persecutions, from heresies, from schisms, from the wickedness and immoralities of her own children, but nothing has been able to shake her from the rock, on which she stands. Earthly kingdoms may fall and vanish into naught; but thy kingdom, O God, is a kingdom of all ages. The Lord is faithful in all his promises. The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but

† John xxi.

‡ 1 Tim. iii.

but my words, says our blessed Lord,\* shall not pass away.

O Jesus, the co-eternal Son of the Father, thou art the true light, ¶ that enlightens every man, who cometh into the world. For us men and for our salvation thou deignedst to descend from heaven and to become man, that thou mightest seek and save that, which was lost. O suffer not, O Lord; so bright a mercy to be frustrated of its end thro' our ingratitude and neglect. Quicken our dull souls with the rays of thy holy grace, that we may never be rebellious to the light; enlighten all those, who sit in the shade of ignorance and infidelity, that they may also rise and walk in the way of eternal life. For thou art the way, which all must follow; thou art the truth, which all must believe, and thou art the life, which we all expect for the crown of our happiness. For there is no salvation in any other, ‡ neither is there any other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved; so  
that

\* Mark xiii.

¶ John i.

‡ Acts iv.



that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend \* in heaven, on earth, in hell, and every tongue confess, that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.  
*Amen.*

\* Phil. ii.

## DISCOURSE II.

UPON THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

*The Word was made flesh. John c. i. v. 14.*

**G**OD is one in nature, and three in Persons. That there is but one God natural reason may evince, because to natural reason it is evident, that there can be no more than One supreme Being. But a Trinity of Persons, really distinct in the same divine nature, and yet making but one and the same indivisible God, is a mystery, which man in his mortal state never could have known without the light of divine revelation. This Trinity of Persons in the Godhead includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These three divine Persons ineffably exist from eternity in the same undivided nature, with the same power, the same wisdom, and the same equality of all perfection. They are consequently the same one incomprehensible and eternal God; because in each one of them the Divinity is

is identically the same. This ineffable Unity and Trinity of God has been always taught by the Christian religion, and is the first fundamental article of her belief.

A second fundamental article of the Christian religion is, that one of these three divine Persons became incarnate and dwelt amongst us.\* This also is a mystery so sublime and so replete with mercy from God to man, that without the aid of revelation we neither could have conceived nor expected it. By the express word of God himself we are informed, that this real and substantial union of the divine and human nature has taken place in the Person of Jesus Christ, who is the second Person of the most blessed Trinity, the eternal Son of God, and true light of the world. Jesus Christ therefore by associating human nature to the divine in his own Person is become both God and man, the Redeemer of mankind, the Mediator of our peace with God, and Saviour of the world.

\* John i.

The doctrine of a God made man was so far above the reach of man's natural comprehension, as has been already noticed, that it could not possibly be credited upon any other than divine authority. God therefore in his wisdom so revealed it by degrees, that man might not be left destitute of all consolation in his fallen state, and that the world might be prepared to receive it in due time. This wonderful work of divine mercy was first announced\* by God himself to our unhappy parents soon after their transgression in the earthly paradise. This consolatory promise of a Messiah, who should one day crush the Serpent's head, was carefully handed down by tradition from generation to generation thro' a long series of ages. To Abraham the great progenitor of God's chosen people it was more distinctly revealed, † that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed. Abraham in spirit saw the day and rejoiced. § After him the inspired Patriarch Jacob his grand-son

\* Gen. iii    † C. xxii.    § John viii.



son absolutely pronounced, that when the scepter should be taken away from Judah, and a leader of his race should fail, then the Messiah, the promised expectation of nations should come. † From the root of Jesse, says Isaiah, || a branch shall rise, and on him the Spirit of the Lord shall rest. For behold a Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son. ¶ Emmanuel is his name, that is to say, God-with-us. A Child is born unto us, and a Son is given to us.\* This Child is the Prince of peace, the Father of the future age: he is God, the Wonderful, the Mighty. His empire shall be multiplied and of his peace there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom he shall sit, that he may establish and strengthen it with judgment and with justice from henceforward and for evermore. Hence the people, that walked in darkness, have seen a great light, and to them, that dwelt in the regions of the shadow of death, light is risen. These and the like wonderful predictions

† Gen. xxii.

|| C. xi.

¶ C. vii.

\* C. ix.

predictions concerning the Messiah, altho' expressed in other terms, are likewise to be gathered from the royal Prophet. Daniel moreover is very exprefs upon this subject. "I beheld in the vision of the night, says  
 "he,\* and lo! one like the Son of man  
 "came with the clouds of heaven, and he  
 "came even to the Ancient of days, who  
 "gave him power and glory and a king-  
 "dom. And all people, tribes and tongues  
 "shall serve him. His power is an ever-  
 "lasting power, that shall not be taken  
 "away, and his kingdom shall not be  
 "destroyed."

The expression of *the Son of Man*, so distinctly specified by the Prophet, claims particular attention, because it is the title, which Jesus Christ our Lord afterwards appropriated in a special manner to himself in his public capacity, and must therefore specify the same person. These predictions raised the expectation of God's people and kept awake their hope of seeing the Messiah one day appear, who  
 should

\* C. vii.

should heal the miseries of the Jewish nation, and restore the kingdom of Israel to its ancient splendour. They were therefore constantly pouring forth their vows and most ardent supplications to God, that he would hasten the time of their deliverance. They called incessantly upon the clouds and eternal hills in terms the most expressive of their hope and strong desire, that their Saviour would descend from the highest heavens, and shower down his graces upon all the earth. But as all prophecy is essentially obscure, 'till cleared up by the event, they could not penetrate the counsels of this wonderful Prince of peace, whom they expected; neither could they comprehend the full extent of his power and glory, nor conceive the perpetuity of his kingdom in that spiritual sense, in which it was to be understood.

That a God infinitely great and completely happy within himself should ever assume human nature and thereby partake of its common pains and miseries, that a God  
omnipotent

omnipotent and immortal, whose existence is from eternity, should be born in time and dwell in mortal flesh amongst us, was a mystery too high for flesh and blood to comprehend. Wherefore to form a just estimate, and as far as possible, to acquire a right understanding of this sublime mystery, it is not enough to search the old Scripture only, we must also consult the new, and compare the one with the other. What the ancient Prophets have been inspired to foretel, the Evangelists have likewise been inspired to explain. For the holy men of God, spoke as St. Peter assures us,\* being inspired by the Holy Ghost. Under their guidance we can never err.

The Evangelists were men of consummate wisdom in the eyes of God, artless, sincere, holy, and incapable of dissimulation and deceit. Such have they been considered by all succeeding ages. They were well versed in the writings of the Prophets, as appears from their own, and singularly endowed

\* 2 Ep. 1.



endowed with the gifts of the holy Spirit. St. John, one of these Evangelists, tells us, that “the Word was made flesh,† and “dwelt amongst us; that the Word is “God, by whom all things are made; “that in the beginning the Word was, “and was eternally with God.” Consequently the Word was never made, but has always been and has had no beginning. He is therefore a self-existing Being before all ages, immense, omnipotent, unlimited and eternal. This is the true God; § the Word of God is his name; ¶ he is the same God as the Father, || the King of kings and the Lord of lords. For from the Father he essentially and eternally proceeds as his only begotten, consubstantial and co-eternal Son, the splendour of his glory, and the uncreated figure of his substance. To him therefore St. Paul directly and absolutely applies \* these words of the Psalmist, “And thou, Lord, hast “founded the earth in the beginning, and “the work of thy hands are the heavens; “these

† C. i. § 1 Ep. v. ¶ Rev. xix. || John x. \* Heb. i.

“ these shall perish, but thou shalt remain.  
 “ These shall grow old like a garment ;  
 “ thou shalt change them, and they shall  
 “ be changed, but thou thyself art the  
 “ the same, and thy years shall not fail.”

From these concurrent testimonies of the old and new Testament it is indisputably evinced, that the eternal Word, the only begotten Son of the Father is become incarnate, and that by an union of the divine and human nature in the same Person Jesus Christ is both God and man. The Prophets, the Apostles, the Evangelists, the whole Catholic Church in fine in every age and in every nation, where it has ever been professed, unanimously agree in their belief of this divine mystery. How this mystery has been wrought is our next subject of inquiry.

After a lapse of four thousand years from Adam's fall, when the plenitude of time fixed for man's redemption was at hand, God \* sent the Angel Gabriel to a Virgin, whose name was Mary, for  
 the

\* Luke i.

the exprefs purpose of obtaining her consent to become mother of the Word incarnate. Mary by the special disposition of divine Providence was espoused to a virtuous man called Joseph, who was lineally descended from David, and lived in Nazareth, a small city of Galilee. Thither the Angel came, and entering into the house addressed the Virgin in these words: "Hail, full of grace, our Lord "is with thee, blessed art thou amongst "women." The dignity, to which Mary by the grace of her Creator was now destined, was so eminent, and so unparalleled were the virtues, which in consequence adorned her soul, that to the Angel she seemed possessed of more sanctity, and replenished with richer graces, than fell to the share of any other woman. The humble Virgin, not yet apprised of the mystery to be wrought within her, was troubled at the Angel's words, and considered with herself, what so singular an address could possibly tend to. The Angel saw the trouble of her mind,

mind, and thus continued: " Mary, fear  
 " not. Great is the favour thou hast found  
 " with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive\*  
 " in thy womb, and bring forth a Son,  
 " whom thou shalt call Jesus. He shall  
 " be great, and he shall be called the Son  
 " of the most High. He shall reign in  
 " the house of Jacob for ever, § and of his  
 " Kingdom there shall be no end." " But  
 " how shall that be, replied Mary, since  
 " my fixed purpose is to remain a Virgin,  
 " as I am?" " It shall be by the power  
 " of the most High. For the Holy Spirit  
 " shall come down from above, said the  
 " Angel, and the power of the most High  
 " shall overshadow thee: and therefore the  
 " Holy, which shall be born of thee, shall  
 " be called the Son of God." By this clear  
 and decisive answer Mary's difficulty was  
 now removed, and she was fully convinced,  
 that by the singular power of God, to  
 whom nothing is impossible, she might  
 become a mother and yet remain a pure  
 virgin. Wherefore without any further

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hesitation

\* Isaiah vii.

§ Dan. vii.



hesitation she bowed obedience to the divine will. Neither doubting of the mystery, which was announced, nor elated with the dignity, to which she was upon the point of being raised, she humbly said to the Angel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." The Angel having thus successfully concluded his commission departed from her.

The Virgin had now consented to become the mother of God. Her consent was no sooner given, than she conceived, and without breach of her virginal integrity bore a Son in her most chaste womb.\* For by the powerful and invisible operation of the Holy Ghost a perfect human body was immediately formed of her virginal substance, into which a new-created soul was instantly infused, and both in the same moment were substantially united to God in the second Person of the most blessed Trinity, which is God the Son. Thus according to the expression  
of

\* Isaiah vii.

of St. John,\* the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. Thus are the divine and human natures substantially united in the Person of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ in consequence thereof is truly and really both God and man. He is God, because he necessarily retains the same divine nature, which he had and always will have from eternity to eternity without the least internal variation or change. He is also man, because having assumed the nature of man by uniting to himself a human soul and body, he is now in all respects, sin excepted, become like one of us, as the Apostle testifies. ¶ Hence by reason of a perfect communication of the properties peculiar to each nature it is true to say, that God is made man, that God was conceived and born; that God suffered, that God was crucified, that God died, and was buried. To certain ears, not trained to the habit of attending to divine truths, this language may perchance sound harsh. If so, it must be solely to

a want of attention, to a want of experience, and to a want of knowledge, that the seeming harshness of expression in this case can be attributed. For it must always be remembered, that in Jesus Christ there is his body, his soul, and his divinity, and that each of these three has its own peculiar qualities, which, altho' in a separate sense they cannot be applied to each individually, yet taken in a compound sense are strictly applicable to the whole. Thus man in his compound state is truly said to be mortal and to live but a short time; yet in his soul, which is the most precious part of him, we know him to be immortal and destined to live for ever. So on the other hand, altho' man be properly said to be an active, thinking Being, yet in a state of separation from his soul we know his body is no more than a lifeless lump of inactive matter. Matter is as incapable of thought, when united with as when separated from the soul. The soul only thinks.

But when it is said, that the Word was  
made

made flesh, we are not to imagine, that God was thereby altered in his nature, or by any change of his divinity transformed into man. For God is immutable by his very essence.\* He is one, complete, unalterable perfection, to which no new perfection can be added, and from which nothing can be taken away. Therefore there is not with him any change, nor the slightest shadow of any change. † Neither is it to be understood, that by the Word's taking flesh the divinity was either mixed or blended with human nature, so as to form out of the two a compounded nature, which should be neither human nor divine. No, my Brethren, that could not be. In Jesus Christ tho' the two natures really and substantially unite, yet each remains entire in itself, unconfused and unmixed ; by the one he is inferiour, by the other he is equal to the Father in all things. Each nature being thus perfect and distinct in Jesus Christ, it evidently follows, that in him there are also two

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distinct

\* Mal. iii.

† James i.



distinct wills, one divine, the other human. This appears from the interiour conflict of his mind in the garden of Gethsemani, when he humbly prayed to his eternal Father, saying, *Not my will but thine be done.\**

Hence grounded on the certainty of divine revelation, and convinced by the authority of the holy Scriptures, as they have always been received and delivered to us by the Church of God, we undoubtedly believe with the faithful of all ages, that Jesus Christ our Redeemer is the only begotten Son of the Father, who having always with Him and the Holy Ghost the same indivisible nature, is therefore with them the same one indivisible and eternal God: that in the womb of the Virgin Mary he became incarnate by taking to himself a human body and soul like ours, and thereby became truly man without ceasing to be what he always was truly God.

This, my Brethren, is the Catholic Church's doctrine concerning the mystery of

\* Luke xxii.

of the Incarnation. It is the doctrine of all ages, of all tongues and all nations, wherever the Catholic religion is or has at any time been professed. There never was any Catholic Christian without a belief in the Incarnation. Without a firm belief of this essential article all other articles of his pretended Creed can be no other, than a confused heap of arbitrary opinions, founded in uncertainty and believed by whim. Such a nominal believer, whoever he may be, can only be compared to a foolish man,\* who built his house upon the sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat against that house: it fell, and great was the fall thereof. Similar must be the ruin of every religious system, which has not the Word incarnate for its foundation. The Incarnation of the Son of God is, as we have seen, so clearly and so fully attested in holy writ, that no man can reject it, and respect his Bible. It is a mystery so full of goodness on the part of God, that it claims our

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most

\* Mat. vii.

most grateful homage; a mystery so full of comfort with respect to man, that it must be a mark of strange perverseness in him not to receive and embrace it, as the hope of his salvation.

Yet either from the malice of our infernal enemy, or from the ignorance and pride of innovating men various errors have been broached at different times against this adorable mystery, to the great scandal and disturbance of Christ's faithful flock. Before the close even of the first century Cerinthus, a disciple of Simon the magician, began to dogmatise at Antioch against the Catholic doctrine, and amongst other errors impiously maintained, that Jesus was but a pure man, sprung from Joseph and Mary in the ordinary course of nature. He had some obscure followers, whom St. John calls the Antichrists\* of those days. The Bishops however of Asia Minor grew apprehensive, lest the infectious doctrine might corrupt their tender flocks, and for that reason earnestly besought

\* 1 Ep. 2.

sought St. John to refute the heresy in its birth. St. John in compliance with their request wrote his Gospel, which is a complete refutation of all, that has been or can be said against the Divinity and Incarnation of the Son of God.

About the beginning of the fourth century Arius, an ambitious priest of Alexandria, being disappointed in his pretensions to that Patriarchal See, began to declaim against the divinity of Jesus Christ, boldly denying him to be God of the same divine nature and substance with the Father. New and blasphemous as it was, the assertion had its abettors even in the Episcopal order, and became the cause of great commotions both in Church and state. A general council of three hundred and eighteen Bishops assembled at Nice and condemned the Arian doctrine, as repugnant to holy Scripture, and contrary to the ancient and universal belief of the Catholic Church. The Nicene Creed, after violent opposition from the condemned party, was everywhere received by the faithful with the

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greatest veneration, and has ever since been sacred in every particular Church of Christendom.

Little more than a hundred years after, Nestorius Bishop of Constantinople, being dazzled with the lustre of his own talents and eloquent abilities, erred against the mystery of the Incarnation, by asserting, that as in Jesus Christ there were two natures, so were there also two Persons, the one divine, the other human ; and that as he only took human nature from the Virgin, the Virgin, as he pretended, was not mother of God. Two hundred Bishops met in general council at Ephesus to determine the point, and by a solemn decree declared, that conformably to the holy Scriptures the Virgin Mary was truly the mother of God, and that such had always been the sense of the holy Catholic Church. Because by having contributed a part of her corporeal substance for the formation of Jesus's body in her womb, Mary was truly the mother of Him, who was truly God.

Eutyches, an illiterate Abbot of a monastery

nastery in Constantinople, and Dioscorus Bishop of Alexandria ran into the opposite extreme, and erroneously maintained, that as in Christ there was but one Person, so there could be but one nature. Christ's human nature, according to them, from its union with the divinity was so blended with, or so wholly absorbed by it, as to leave him no more than the phantom of a body, and consequently tho' he seemed to suffer and to die, that in fact he underwent no real sufferings and no real death. This strange medly of heterodox opinions was condemned in the fourth general Council held at Chalcedon in the year 451.

In the seventh century sprung up the heresy of the Monothelites, who contended, that in Christ there was but one will, which was a divine will. This doctrine had Sergius the Patriarch of Constantinople, and Cyrus the Patriarch of Alexandria, for its chief authors. But being an innovation repugnant to the ancient faith of Christ's Church, it was solemnly condemned as  
such

such by the sixth general Council held at Constantinople in the year 680.

Such are the principal errors, which at different times have been fabricated by designing men against the mystery of the Incarnation. These errors no sooner began to disturb the peace of the faithful, than they were vigorously opposed and condemned by the combined Prelates of Christ's Church. Their condemnation is a repeated triumph of the Catholic truth, and to the latest posterity it will stand as an indisputable proof, that no error, and no power of hell, according to Christ's promise,\* ever shall prevail against his Church. In vain then would the Unitarian or Socinian sect attempt in these latter days to renew the condemned errors of ancient times; on reflection they must feel themselves involved in the same disgrace, that crushed their former innovating Brethren.

From hence two conclusions naturally result both for our instruction and our practice.

The

\* Mat. xvi.

The first is, that we humbly submit to the authority of divine revelation in believing those sublime and unfathomable truths, which are universally believed and taught by the holy Catholic Church. This right reason dictates to us. For when the point is above the reach of private judgment, reason tells us to follow the direction of that guide, which is appointed us by God himself. That guide is the holy Catholic Church. For who will not hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen or a publican.\* God strictly claims the interior homage of our souls as well as the external homage of our actions. Without the first the latter can never please. Amongst the internal acts of our religious duty to God, the first is to subject our understanding by faith to the obedience of Christ. § Because without faith it is impossible to please God. † Therefore our blessed Saviour says, who does not believe shall be condemned. ¶

The second conclusion is, that we make  
the

\* Mat. xviii. § 1 Cor. x. † Heb. xi. ¶ Mark xvi.



the best return we can of gratitude and love to our heavenly Father, who has so loved us, as to give us his only begotten Son for our Redemption. By frequent and devout reflection we should seriously endeavour to be feelingly convinced of the inestimable favour we have received : we then shall be grateful for it. Our gratitude to be sincere, can be no otherwise expressed than by a fervent and constant attention to the divine service in a faithful discharge of all our Christian duties.

O divine Jesus, we bow down and adore thy unspeakable goodness ! To redeem a slave thou hast descended from thy throne of glory, to save lost man thou hast put on weak mortality. Thine, O God, is the praise, and thine the glory for so gratuitous an act. For in man there was nothing, that could attract or deserve thy bounty. Without thy preventing grace there was not in the heart of man even the disposition to thank thee for thy favours, or to profit by them. Pardon, O Jesus, pardon all our past ingratitude ; soften our hearts  
into

into compunction; awaken in us a lively sense of thy incomprehensible goodness, that we may never fail in our duty to thee, never falter in our love, and never be confounded in our hope. Enlighten all, who sit in darkness, and in ignorance of thy sacred mysteries, that they may do honour to thy holy name by acknowledging their error, and sincerely confess thee to be the true God \* our Lord, our only Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

\* John 1 Ep. c. v. v. 20.

DISCOURSE

## DISCOURSE III.

UPON THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

*Behold, I announce to you tidings of great joy,  
because unto you a Saviour is born, who is  
Christ the Lord. Luke c. ii. v. 10, 11.*

**T**HE Word incarnate, having passed nine months in the womb of his Virgin Mother, was born in Bethlehem, a city of Juda. The prophecy of Isaiah was then fully verified. For behold a Child is born unto us; God is his name.\* A Virgin has conceived and brought forth a Son. Sing ye therefore unto the Lord a new song, † for he hath done great things. Sound his praise thro' all the nations even unto the extremities of the earth. Make his inventions known among the people; remember, that his name is high. Give praise, O ye heavens, because the Lord hath shown mercy. § Rejoice and praise, thou habitation of Sion, for great is He, who is in the midst of thee, the holy

\* C. ix.    † C. xlii.    § C. xliv.

holy One of Israel. Behold God thy Saviour. \* Behold, the eternal Son of God has descended from heaven, and in the form of a new-born infant has sprung forth for the comfort and salvation of his people.

No sooner was he born, but an Angel of the Lord came to announce him to the shepherds, who were keeping the midnight watch over their flocks in the neighbouring country. At the Angel's approach a divine brightness spread itself suddenly around them, and they grew exceedingly afraid. Be not afraid, said the Angel to them, for I bring you cheerful tidings, which shall be a subject of gladness and the cause of great joy to all men. Because this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. You will find him wrapt in swathing cloths, and laid in a manger: by this sign you will know him. Scarce had the Angel thus spoken, when a multitude of the heavenly host came and joined him in strains of the sweetest melody, singing *Glory to God in the highest heavens, and peace on earth to men of good will.*



Cheered with the sounds of celestial harmony, the shepherds immediately hastened to the town of Bethlehem. There they found Joseph and Mary, and the Infant lying in the manger, as the Angel said. Their minds were enlightened at the sight. They clearly understood and believed. They believed the Child they saw to be the long-expected Messiah, and the Saviour of the world. Strongly impressed with this awful truth, they were filled with the most lively sentiments of gratitude, respect and homage to their great and bounteous God, who had thus manifested his glory to them; and those sentiments they endeavoured to infuse into the hearts of all they met in their return from Bethlehem. So glowing was their charity and so prompt their zeal to praise and glorify God in the wonderful things they had heard and seen, as it had been revealed to them!

The same divine truths, my Brethren, have been revealed also to us. We believe them also on the same ground and with  
the

the same certitude of faith; the same then should also be the grateful sentiments of our hearts. When with the eye of faith we behold the great God of heaven under the form of an infant lying in a manger, exposed to bitter sufferings from the nature of the place, from the season of the year, from the want even of the most common necessities in life, we wonder and adore. But when we moreover reflect, that this great God of heaven became an infant and was born under all those humiliating and painful circumstances for the love of us, we wonder more. The singular circumstances that accompanied, and the signal benefits we derive from the birth of Jesus Christ, shall form the two divisions of this discourse. In the first will appear the wonderful wisdom and power he displayed in the execution of his adorable decrees; in the second will appear the wonderful goodness he has shown in providing for the happiness of man. Gratitude and zeal in his holy service is the fruit we are to reap from both.

Amongst

Amongst other distinctive titles, which Isaiah \* gave the Child, who was then to be born for us, he stiled him the WONDERFUL. For, whether in the order of grace or of nature, nothing can appear so wonderful in fact, as that a God of infinite perfection should become man, that an immortal God should put on mortality, that an eternal God should be born in time, that an immense and omnipotent God should be confined in the womb of a Virgin, and be swathed in the bands of infancy. No wisdom less than infinite could have devised the means of uniting such opposite extremes. That an omnipotent God by the might of his arm should exalt weak man and make him capable of actions, which surpass his natural abilities, is no hard matter to conceive. Because that power, which first gave to man an existence out of nothing, can likewise give him the ability of exerting his existence to any extent of action, that the limited capacity of human nature will admit. But that  
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\* C. ix.

an omnipotent God should take upon himself the weakness of man, and by choice should stoop to the infirmities of feeble infancy, is a mystery so wonderful to human eyes, that without the authority of God's own word in support of its credibility we never could have believed it.

Man in his fallen state was doomed to numberless infirmities and pains, which in a state of innocence he had never known. Those pains were at once the consequence and punishment of sin. But Jesus Christ, by reason of his divinity being incapable of sinning, was naturally exempt from every pain, which was the punishment of sin. Nor by such an exemption would the great end of his becoming man have been frustrated of its effect. Without grief, without pain or the least bodily affliction, he might have fully satisfied for our sins by a word, by a tear, by a single sigh from his sacred heart; because a single sigh, a tear, a word from Jesus would have been infinitely satisfactory and meritorious. Our ransom would have been paid, and a fund of superabundant



perabundant merits left for the relief and comfort of our souls. But it was necessary, that man should be made fully sensible of the guilt he had incurred by sinning, and be also furnished with such motives for the future amendment of his conduct, as might effectually reclaim him from his sinful habits, and rouse him to the practice of heroic virtues. But for that, bare precept without example would not have sufficed. Jesus therefore having taken the form of man for our redemption, would also for our example partake of the common sufferings of man, becoming in all things so far like unto us, as the sanctity of his person would allow.

Jesus Christ by his divinity being the sovereign disposer of all human events had it in his power to be born at what time, in what place, and in what circumstances he pleased, in a mild or inclement season, at Nazareth or at Bethlehem, in a state of affluence or of want. Sensual man had preferred the first; Jesus in his wisdom chose the latter. With the same wisdom  
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he permitted Cæsar Augustus to indulge his vain desire of knowing the number of his subjects in the whole Roman empire, and to send forth his edict for their enrolment at the most unseasonable time of the year. In obedience to the imperial mandate Mary, who was then in the last stage of her pregnancy, was obliged to set off with Joseph her spouse from Nazareth, and to repair to Bethlehem the city of David, because Joseph by descent was of the house and family of David. At their arrival they found the public inns already engaged, and the town so crowded with strangers, who were come thither to have their names enrolled, that for Mary and Joseph no accommodations could be found. Under these circumstances, which Jesus for his own great designs had permitted so to happen, they retreated to an open stable for shelter against the inclemency of a winter's night. There, when the night had finished half its course, the blessed Virgin finding her time was come brought forth  
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her first-born, wrapped him round with swathing bands, and laid him in the manger.

Great God, how far removed from human sight are thy counsels ! How incomprehensible are thy ways ! As the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are thy ways exalted above the ways of men. The hidden secrets of thy wisdom thou hast made manifest to us. Thou hast chosen the foolish things of this world, as thy Apostle teaches,\* to confound the wise, and thou hast chosen the weak, the mean and contemptible things of this world, to confound the strong, and to destroy the things that are.

Had Jesus Christ, my Brethren, been born amidst the affluence of wealth, or had he come in regal state surrounded with the glittering show of worldly magnificence, vain man had been flattered in his earthly notions, and on that ground might have sought to persuade himself, that the pomps of the world are not incompatible with the humility of the Gospel, or that it is not impossible

\* 1 Cor. i.

impossible to serve God and Mammon at the same time. Riches, if not temperately used, nourish the pride of life, and obviously furnish the means of gratifying every irregular passion and desire.

Jesus therefore chose to be born in a state of voluntary poverty, that by example he might teach his followers to check all inordinate desire of riches, or if riches abound, to make no other than a moderate use of them. An immoderate swell of pride had lifted up the heart of man to rebel against the God, who made him. The humble appearance of an incarnate God in the manger of Bethlehem was therefore wisely adopted to make man sensible of his crime, and to fix him within the bounds of due submission and obedience to his Creator. An ambitious desire of becoming like to God first cast the rebel Angels out of heaven, and afterwards ruined our disobedient parents in the earthly paradise. Jesus Christ was therefore pleased to descend to such a state, that should man persist in his desire of becoming like to



God, he had but to imitate the virtues of an incarnate God, and he could not fail of being happy. Wonderful, O God, is the wisdom of thy decrees! Sweet, but powerful are the designs of thy Providence in bringing all things to their appointed ends!

Mary the mother of Jesus, and Joseph his reputed father, were both of the royal house of David. With equal right to them as to any other branch of David's family the scepter of Juda might have been transmitted, and with them it might have remained to that very day, had the Almighty so decreed. With the same all-ruling hand, which disposes of crowns and scepters as he pleases, it was as easy for him to have placed them in the palace of Sion, as in a stable at Bethlehem. But that was not suitable to his own more exalted views. The notions chiefly entertained by the Jewish people of their expected Messiah were but low and worldly. Of his spiritual kingdom they had little or no idea. Their notions were principally  
confined

confined to worldly objects. They were the selfish dictates of earthly wisdom. Their great ambition was to be delivered from the Roman yoke, and to see the kingdom of Israel restored to its former lustre. It was these worldly notions of pride and ambition, these selfish dictates of earthly wisdom, that Jesus came to destroy. The lowly state, in which he chose to appear in the world, was therefore the very reverse of that expected by the carnal Jews.

The Scripture expressly says,\* that Jesus was to reign for ever in the house of Jacob, and that of his kingdom there should be no end. But his kingdom was not to be of this world, † neither was it by worldly means or on worldly principles to be established. The counsels of God being different from those of the world, different also are the means employed for the attainment of their respective ends. In all worldly undertakings of importance great preparations are usually made, and great

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sums

\* Luke i.

† John xviii.

sums expended to procure success: great parade, great noise, and tumult generally unite in the execution. Vain potentates of the earth grow elate at the splendid appearance of power and magnificence, that surrounds them. But that appearance, when dispassionately considered, is in fact no more than a gorgeous cover to human weakness. The Almighty stands in need of no such imposing pageantry. Resting on the basis of his own omnipotence, he contains within himself the unlimited power of effecting whatever he pleases, in what manner and by what means he pleases, without help, without noise, without show.

Under the humble veil of poverty and seeming weakness, Jesus Christ in the crib of Bethlehem disclosed the most shining marks of power, and under the form of helpless infancy proved himself to be the omnipotent ruler of heaven and earth, the sovereign Lord of men and Angels. By that power, which comprises every living creature within its unbounded empire, he silently called the Angels from their seats

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of bliss to come and proclaim glory to God in the highest heavens, and peace to men of good-will over all the earth. By the same divine power he also sent forth his star, and it shined to the nations of the east.\* It caught the eye and attention of three of their Magi. The Magi, enlightened by divine inspiration knew, that nothing less than the birth of an incarnate God, the light of the Gentiles, was thus manifested to them, and immediately set out upon their journey to seek and adore him. The star moved on before them and led them to Bethlehem. There they found the divine Infant, the object of their search. The light of revelation flashed conviction upon their minds, they fell upon their knees and adored him. No power, that was not divine, could have thus enlightened the understanding, and converted the hearts of unbelievers in obedience to the revelation of a truth, which neither their senses nor their reason could possibly discover. This power was then exerted by



the child Jesus, who thus silently but effectually began to establish his kingdom,† which shall never end.

The kingdom of Jesus Christ, my Brethren, is a spiritual kingdom, unlimited and everlasting. To set man free from the tyranny of sin, and to open to him the gates of heaven, to break down the empire of Satan, and to overturn the altars of idolatry, to spread the knowledge of true religion over all the earth, and to fix the standard of faith upon the ruins of infidelity was its triumph. To reign by faith in the hearts of all believing nations, and to promote the glory of Almighty God by procuring everlasting happiness to men was the noble object Jesus always had before his eyes. To God's intrinsic glory indeed no new degree could possibly accrue. Because in the unlimited enjoyment of his own infinite perfections his glory was for ever full, and his happiness complete. But there is an external glory, which God receives from creatures, and there was in  
man

man a capacity of being made partaker of everlasting happiness with God in his glory. Jesus in his goodness undertook to promote them both.

For the use and benefit of man God had displayed his power in creating the world out of nothing: he had displayed his wisdom in arranging the heavens and the earth in that beauteous order and steady regularity, which forms the system of the universe: he daily displays his providence in governing and preserving the same harmonious system, without the smallest deviation from the laws he first ordained. But in his Incarnation and birth he has particularly displayed his love. In this, says St. Paul,\* has appeared the love, the grace and goodness of God our Saviour, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself an acceptable people. Tho' in glory equal to the Father, the Son deemed it no disparagement to his divinity to take the form of man. Yes, my Brethren, from a

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motive

\* Titus ii, iii.

motive of the purest love Jesus Christ became the Son of man, that he might make us the sons of God. Altho' he foresaw the little inclination we should have of concurring with him in the work of our salvation, yet he altered not his plan of mercy towards us. He descended from the bright mansions of life, that he might rescue our souls from the shades of death; and notwithstanding our ingratitude in return, he has relented neither in his love nor in the design he had formed of our redemption. For our eternal good he joyfully submitted to what our nature usually abhors, humiliations, poverty, sufferings, and contempt. Behold him lying in the manger, as tho' he had been the refuse and despicable outcast of men! Behold the tears, that trickle from his eyes, hear the sighs, that steal from his tender breast, behold his infant limbs, chilled and trembling with the midnight cold! How precious my Brethren, are those sighs and tears of the loving Jesus! How acceptable to his heavenly Father, and how consolatory to every

every repenting sinner ! For what sinner, however great his sins may be, cannot but be consoled with the hopes of pardon, when he contemplates the blessed Infant suffering and weeping for the sins of men.

The time indeed of Christ's nativity has elapsed long since. But the blessings, that result from Christ's nativity, never will elapse. The example he has there given of the most consummate virtues will for ever last ; the marks he has there left of his most precious love can be never blotted out. The influence, which his example and his love have always had upon the principles and actions of mankind, continues still the same, and as long as it meets with no obstacle on their part, will so continue to the end of time. The channel of his mercy is still open to every man, who cometh into the world ; his love for man still glows with the same warmth as in the first instant of his conception, and from his love, as from an inexhaustible source of all good, his graces never cease to flow for our sanctification in the same



abundance as on the day of his nativity. For he is still our Saviour and Redeemer, and tho' sitting at the right hand of his Father in the full splendour of his divinity, he still desires, that all men may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.\*

Jesus came amongst his own chosen people, but to their great reproach his own chosen people received him not. In the crowded inns of Bethlehem no room for Jesus was to be found. Beware, dear Christian, lest the like reproach from a parity of reason be also applicable to you. For it is his desire to dwell within your heart; but he dwells not in the company of sin, because incompatible with his love. Wherefore search the recesses and examine the present disposition of your heart, lest some hidden sin, or some lurking attachment to sin may unfortunately drive him thence. See, what inclinations, what affections, what passions there reside, whether the love of God or of the world there commands. If any one loves me, says our  
blessed

\* 1 Tim. ii.

bleſſed Lord,\* he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and will make our abode with him. How often, dear Chriſtian, has your Saviour knockt for admittance into your heart, and how often has a crowd of worldly purſuits, criminal engagements, and turbulent deſires bid him be gone?

Wherefore prepare the way of the Lord, as he admoniſhes you by his Prophet,§ and make ſtraight his paths. For every valley ſhall be filled up, and every mountain and hill ſhall be lowered; the crooked ſhall be made ſtraight, and the rough ſhall become ſmooth.

In man under the tyranny of his own unbroken paſſions little can be diſcovered, which is not a manifeſt contradiction of the virtues taught him by Jeſus Chriſt. A deep fund of vanity and ſelf-love, a ſtrong deſire of applauſe, an imperious haughtineſs of mind, a roughneſs of temper, a perverſe inclination to evil, a ſlothful neglect of ſpiritual duties, diſſipation, intemperance

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\* John xiv.

§ Iſaiah xl.

perance, sensuality and the pride of life, generally mark the conduct of those, who fondly seek to please the world, and to gratify their sinful appetites in its service. To wean man's heart from its attachment to a corrupt world, and to bring him back into the way of salvation by the attractives of mild example was the gracious design of our blessed Redeemer, when he chose Bethlehem for the place of his nativity. The silent lessons he has there given will teach mankind the practice of every Christian virtue, humility, patience, meekness, resignation, charity and benevolence in its full extent. Jesus Christ in the boundless extent of his love embraced all men without exception. Such, my Brethren, is the love we should also have for one another, and by this characteristic should we all be known for the followers of Jesus Christ, because we are all children of the same heavenly Father. By this, says Christ, all men shall know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.

Jesus

Jesus had all the treasures of the universe at his command, and yet chose to be born in a state of the most distressing poverty. Patience in affliction, silence under persecution, and an entire resignation to the divine appointments is the lesson here given for our practice. Hence let the poor live content in simplicity of heart, without murmuring or repining at the lot assigned them by the hand of Providence, while the rich by moderating their desires will learn in the midst of wealth to be poor in spirit. They will learn to enjoy their riches no otherwise than as the gifts of bounteous heaven, to support with decent propriety the station they hold in life, to succour the needy and afflicted, not to glitter in the circles of extravagance, nor to squander away in costly vanities the bread of helpless orphans and crying widows.

Jesus Christ descended from heaven into the stall of Bethlehem, and tho Lord of the universe meekly submitted to the rude humiliation of being refused admittance within the doors of his own people. From  
his



his own unworthy vassals, in the very city of David his royal progenitor according to the flesh, he suffered this inhospitable treatment for our encouragement, for our example, and instruction. ~~Hence let the~~

148 Christian learn to lower the lofty pride of his heart; to smoothe the roughness of his passions into temper, and to lift himself no longer up in opposition to the divine will. To humble himself with Christ is the direct way of being one day exalted with Christ in glory. It may, perchance, 22 dear Christian, have been your lot to suffer reproach for justice sake, to be unkindly treated by a neighbour, to be slighted or neglected by one, whom you had reason to think your friend. You must naturally feel the sting, that pains you; but beware, lest you aggravate that pain by resentment, or by a hasty desire of revenge. Remember, blessed are the meek, because they shall possess the land.\* Betake yourself in thought to the stable of Bethlehem; there you will learn to check every indignant  
fally

\* Mat. v.

fally, that may assault your soul ; there from the divine Infant you will learn to be meek and humble of heart, the sure means of finding rest in your soul.†

O Jesus, be thou for ever blessed, and may the tongues of men and Angels be incessantly employed in sounding forth thy name, because thou art great, and hast humbled thyself for our sake. Thou art God, the only-begotten Son of the Father, omnipotent and eternal ; of a pure virgin thou hast been born a Child in time for the salvation of us sinners. Dearest Saviour, we adore and magnify thy counsels, because in thy singular mercy thou hast visited thy people from on high, and hast powerfully delivered them from the hands of those, who hate them. Without thy saving grace our souls had for ever sat in the shades of death, and endless despair had been our portion far from the land of the living. But at thy birth the light of salvation is risen upon the earth, and thy glory has been revealed in the wonderful love thou  
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hast manifested for us. By that light we must direct our steps, or we shall still wander in the dark, and lost will be the efforts of thy love to save us. Deplorable misfortune! Thro' the help of thy holy grace, which we humbly crave, we now firmly purpose, and it shall be our future study to concur with thee more earnestly, than hitherto we have done, in finishing the work of our salvation, by a more minute and more practical attention to the discharge of our Christian obligations.

Kindle, then, O Jesus, in our souls, the fire of thy holy love, that we may be ever prompt to undertake, and zealous to perform all, that duty shall require at our hands. Awaken in our hearts a lively sense of thy great mercy to us, that being always mindful of thy goodness we may be always grateful in return. Comfort and support us in the many trials we must pass thro', till we come to the happy term, where with thee and in thee we hope to find everlasting rest. So be it.

DISCOURSE

## DISCOURSE IV.

UPON THE CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS CHRIST.

*His name was called Jesus. Luke c. ii. v. 21.*

CIRCUMCISION was a religious law peculiar to the Jews; it was ordained in express terms by God himself, who first imposed it upon their great Patriarch Abraham, as a distinctive mark, by which he and his posterity should be known for a chosen people, till the promised Messiah should come for the redemption of mankind. The law admitted of no dispensation, and the ceremony was directed to be performed on the eighth day after the birth of the child. Jesus therefore according to the established law was circumcised in due form, and his name was called Jesus. For this was the name, which the Angel expressed to Mary, before she conceived him in her womb.\* Other infants usually receive their name at the choice and direction of their earthly parents, but the

\* Luke c. ii.



the divine Infant received his from his heavenly Father. The name was brought to his virgin Mother by an Angel from heaven, a name, which is above every other name ; for in the name of Jesus every knee shall bend. || The name is sacred and divine, fully expressive of the sublime and awful character of Him, who bears it. Jesus, that is to say Saviour, is his name ; for he shall save his people from their sins.\*

To show how wonderfully and in how plenteous a manner Jesus has wrought our salvation is the subject of this discourse. Before his coming we neither had the power nor the means of gaining heaven ; but by him and through him alone we now have both. 1st. Jesus he is our Saviour, because he has paid the ransom of our souls. 2dly. Jesus is our Saviour, because he has furnished us with the means of saving our souls.

When Almighty God created our first parents, he created them for an end the most sublime, an end far above the reach  
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of their natural abilities ; it was to enjoy him in a supernatural state of everlasting happiness in his heavenly kingdom. When Adam was first formed out of the slime of the earth, his body like every other earthly substance, was naturally liable to corruption and decay ; but by a gratuitous favour of his Creator, it was endowed with the supereminent qualities of incorruption and immortality, and consequently exempt from every external impression, that tended to destroy it. Being originally created, as St. Paul says,\* in a state of righteousness, and in the sanctity of truth, his will was ever pliant to the dictates of reason, without struggle, and reason ever prompted him to obey the divine will with alacrity. A delightful garden was his temporary place of residence, from whence after a certain term of probation, had he only persevered in his original innocence, he would have been translated from earth to heaven, which had been prepared for him from the beginning of the world. To deserve that unspeakable happiness he had but one easy

\* Eph. iv.

precept

precept to observe, and that was not to touch the fruit of a certain tree, which grew in the middle of paradise. But by the malice of a fallen Angel, his innocence was betrayed. He ate of the forbidden fruit, as Eve had done before him, and thereby incurred his Creator's anger.

The deluded parents of mankind had no sooner yielded to sin, but they began to feel its punishment. Their peace of mind being broken by the consciousness of guilt, their souls were that instant stung with shame and keen remorse. Having disregarded the command of their Creator, they were stript of the happy privileges, that adorned their first innocence; they became subject to the laws of mortality and corruption. Banished from their delightful home, they were driven forth into a desert land, where they were to toil with hunger, and labour and pain, till death should crumble their bodies into dust, from which they had been first formed.

If the dissolution of their mortal substance into dust had been the only punishment

ment of their transgression, their most noble part, I mean their souls, might have still been happy, while their bodies slept in the silent grave. But their souls being infected with the stain of sin, there was no admittance for them into the heavenly mansions. The gates of heaven were barred against them, nor was it possible by any penance they could do, or by any satisfaction they could offer, to open to themselves those gates again. For the best satisfaction they could pretend to was no more than the weak exertion of guilty and undeserving sinners; a satisfaction infinitely too small to atone for an injury done against infinite majesty. Their crime being estimated by the unbounded greatness of the God they had offended, no penance they could do in reparation of so outrageous an insult, could be ever equal to their guilt.

Our unhappy parents therefore saw themselves, their children, and their whole posterity, for ever excluded from the kingdom of heaven by their own fault, unless it should please the divine mercy, of which  
they



they were wholly undeserving, to raise them from their fallen state. For as by sin they were become rebels against God their Creator, they had consequently forfeited all the privileges of their former state, and had lost their title of inheritance to the kingdom of heaven. Their children were then born the sons of wrath, inheriting from their attained parents the guilt of sin and rebellion, with all their painful consequences. Through one man, says St. Paul, || sin entered into the world, and by sin, death: so death passed unto all men. For by the disobedience of one man all were made sinners, and in consequence of that one offence death reigned, and condemnation came upon the whole human race. By that heavy tho' just sentence man was condemned not only to lose the enjoyment of celestial happiness, which in a state of innocence he had been entitled to, but to suffer also a variety of evils in a mortal state, to which his corrupt nature was now subject.

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In consequence of his having rebelled against God a strange conflict of passions sprung up within his own breast, the constant source of struggle and rebellion against himself. Being wounded in all the faculties of his soul, he found the exercise of virtue difficult and painful. Blinded in his understanding he faintly saw the force and light of the revealed truths, which made no lasting impression on him, whilst drawn by the bent of perverse nature his will was habitually inclined to follow the sensual gratification it received from external objects, rather than submit to the restraint of duty and reason. Reason itself was also much weakened in its discernment of right and wrong, so that it was frequently betrayed by false appearances, and for imaginary good embraced real evil. Thus in a short time vice began to spread among the sons of Adam, and to original sin actual sins of the blackest die were added without end or number. Men, wholly addicted to the indulgence of their carnal appetites, had forgot the noble end  
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of their creation, they were grown even ignorant of the God, who made them, they made to themselves gods of creatures, and gave to idols the worship due to their Creator. Thus with the exception of one small chosen nation, the whole world lay buried in the dark gulf of ignorance and infidelity.

In this forlorn and helpless state mankind had continued to groan for full four thousand years, when it pleased the divine mercy to look down with an eye of compassion on them. The time of redemption was now come, which God had fixed for the manifestation of his love for man by sending him a Saviour in the person of his only-begotten Son. And hence it is, as St. Paul assures us,\* that the goodness of God comes so strongly and so wonderfully recommended to us, because Christ our divine Redeemer vouchsafed to die for us, while we yet were sinners. For the tears of affliction, shed so long and so plentifully by all our race, had not cleansed our

\* Rom. v.

our souls from guilt; our reconciliation with an offended Deity was not yet begun, nor had the sufferings of ages effected the smallest diminution in the debt we owed to divine justice.

Therefore it was not to any natural or moral good to be discovered in us, nor was it to any primary excellence of our nature, that the grace of redemption can be attributed. For the fallen Angels were originally of a more exalted nature, and capable of promoting the divine glory in a more eminent degree: yet to them God has not granted a Redeemer. To his own unbounded mercy we then must ascribe the motive, which induced him to raise up lost man, while he leaves the rebel Angels sentenced without redress to everlasting fire. A single act of his almighty will would have been sufficient to forgive the sin, and to re-instate us in the privileges of our first creation. But that act neither would have paid the ransom due for our forfeited innocence, nor have repaired the injury done by sin to God's infinite Majesty. Ac-



cording to the eternal decrees of God, this ransom of our souls was to be paid by sufferings, which should at the same time be a full reparation of the insult committed by our first parents against God. Such a reparation could be nothing less than infinite both in its value and in its operation, because nothing less than infinite could be equal to the offence committed against infinite majesty. Such a reparation none but God himself could make, and to make it by sufferings seemed on the other hand to be incompatible with his divine perfections. For God in his own nature was infinitely too perfect to be capable of suffering. The means of reconciling the two extremes could be devised by infinite wisdom alone. By divine wisdom it was decreed, that God should assume human nature, which on account of its union with the divine would become capable of making an adequate atonement for sin by sufferings infinitely acceptable and meritorious.

This, my Brethren, the second Person  
of

of the most blessed Trinity has been pleased to do for our sake. ~ The eternal Son of the Father, being in the form of God, says St. Paul,\* divested himself of all the marks of greatness in assuming the form of a servant, and tho' equal in all things to the Father himself appeared amongst us in the shape and character of an humble, obedient, suffering man. From the moment of his Incarnation in the womb of his virgin mother, he was truly God and truly man, because to the nature of God, which he had from eternity he then joined the nature of man by taking a soul and body like us. From that moment he became truly our Redeemer; because being man he was capable of suffering for us; and as his humanity was in one person united to and subsisted in the divinity of the Word eternal, his sufferings became infinitely meritorious, because they were the sufferings of a God made man. For it became him, for whom and by whom all things are, † to consummate the author of man's salvation by suffering. In the suffer-

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\* Phil. ii. † Heb. ii.

ings therefore of Jesus Christ our Saviour, at once appears the goodness and the justice of God most wonderfully combined together, while by the perfect and consummate sacrifice of his only Son our Lord, his divine honour is fully repaired on one hand, and our sins fully expiated on the other.

Great God, how wonderful are thy ways, how exalted are thy counsels over the sons of men! To redeem a slave thou hast sent us thy only Son, clothed in the form and habit of mortal man. For by sin we were become the slaves of Satan, fettered with the chains of bondage, and branded with the mark of reprobation. But by the grace of redemption that mark of reprobation has been blotted out of our souls, our chains have been taken off, and ourselves are raised to the high rank of adoptive sons of God, the heirs of his kingdom, and the co-heirs of Christ in everlasting glory. What exalted sentiments of praise, of admiration, of gratitude and love, ought such an effusion of the divine goodness to inspire  
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into every human heart? With what zeal, my Brethren, with what pious affection, with what promptitude of will ought we to co-operate with our blessed Lord in the great work of our salvation? For tho' he has gratuitously paid the ransom of our souls, yet to profit by the ransom we must comply with the moral and religious duties, which he has imposed upon us both by word and example. If we would reign with Christ, we must first learn to labour and to suffer with Christ.

For our example and encouragement in this part of our Christian duty, he voluntarily chose to live a hard and painful life from his very infancy, 'till he expired upon the cross. The divinity of his Person, united to his humanity, stamped an infinite value upon each action he performed, the least of which would have abundantly sufficed for the redemption of the whole world. But had he thus redeemed us, we then might not have been so sensible either of his overflowing mercy, or of our own unspeakable misery. To make us sensible



ings therefore of Jesus Christ our Saviour, at once appears the goodness and the justice of God most wonderfully combined together, while by the perfect and consummate sacrifice of his only Son our Lord, his divine honour is fully repaired on one hand, and our sins fully expiated on the other.

Great God, how wonderful are thy ways, how exalted are thy counsels over the sons of men! To redeem a slave thou hast sent us thy only Son, clothed in the form and habit of mortal man. For by sin we were become the slaves of Satan, fettered with the chains of bondage, and branded with the mark of reprobation. But by the grace of redemption that mark of reprobation has been blotted out of our souls, our chains have been taken off, and ourselves are raised to the high rank of adoptive sons of God, the heirs of his kingdom, and the co-heirs of Christ in everlasting glory. What exalted sentiments of praise, of admiration, of gratitude and love, ought such an effusion of the divine goodness to inspire  
into

into every human heart? With what zeal, my Brethren, with what pious affection, with what promptitude of will ought we to co-operate with our blessed Lord in the great work of our salvation? For tho' he has gratuitously paid the ransom of our souls, yet to profit by the ransom we must comply with the moral and religious duties, which he has imposed upon us both by word and example. If we would reign with Christ, we must first learn to labour and to suffer with Christ.

For our example and encouragement in this part of our Christian duty, he voluntarily chose to live a hard and painful life from his very infancy, 'till he expired upon the cross. The divinity of his Person, united to his humanity, stamped an infinite value upon each action he performed, the least of which would have abundantly sufficed for the redemption of the whole world. But had he thus redeemed us, we then might not have been so sensible either of his overflowing mercy, or of our own unspeakable misery. To make us sensible

both of the one and of the other, he was born in such circumstances as usually attend the most distressed and comfortless. As tho' he had been but a common child of the race of Abraham, he submitted to the humiliating ceremony of circumcision, and when but eight days old began to shed his blood, as a pledge of that plenteous redemption, which he had decreed to accomplish in due season. He might at once have finished the work of man's redemption by falling with the innocents of Bethlehem a victim to Herod's sword. But for our instruction he had duties of a religious as well as of a civil nature to teach by example, for our observance he had the Evangelical law to proclaim, for our direction in fine in the way of eternal life, he had a Church to establish, which he has strictly commanded us to hear and obey.\* Jesus Christ is therefore the Saviour of mankind, not only because he has paid the ransom of their souls from death, but because he has

\* Mat. xviii.

has moreover provided them with the means of obtaining eternal life.

Jesus Christ is for this reason † stiled the Mediator of the New Testament, because by means of his death he has delivered us from our former bondage of sin, and by the effusion of his own most precious blood has cleansed our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Hence having in him an inherent power to save all those, who thro' him come unto God, ‡ he has opened the heavenly mansions to all men, and has so far placed the application of his saving power within our reach, that we may, if we only will, secure to ourselves the promise of eternal inheritance. For tho' almighty God in the benevolent designs of his universal Providence most earnestly desires the salvation of all men, and has in general furnished them with every necessary help for that end, yet in his unerring wisdom he has been pleased to create us free, that virtue might have its merit, and assert its title



to a just reward. It is therefore left to the free determination of our own will, whether we shall concur with the merciful designs of God towards our own happiness or not, and whether we shall in practice adopt those special means, which he has ordained for the sanctification of our souls. For to benefit by the treasure of our Saviour's merits we must have recourse to those spiritual means, which he has been pleased to appoint for that end. Without the appointment of such means, incomplete had been the work of our redemption. For altho' Jesus Christ had laid down the ransom of our souls, and by his blood had purchased an inexhaustible treasure of merits and divine grace, yet to us that treasure would still be of no avail, were it not particularly applied by some efficacious instruments of grace according to his own most merciful institution. The most sovereign balsam, however well prepared, never can, unless properly applied, produce its healing effect. The chief and general means, which our blessed Saviour has

has appointed for our help, in accomplishing the work of our salvation, are the preaching of his holy Word, the establishment of his Church, the succession of Pastors, the stability and unity of Faith, and the institution of Sacraments, without which the healing grace of redemption had been never applicable to our souls.

The word of God, as handed to us by the Church from its first foundation, is as a bright burning lamp, which not only dispels our darkness, but likewise directs our steps in the way of salvation. By the blaze of this sacred light, which has spread its rays over all the earth, we distinctly see all, that God has done for us, and all, that he requires we should do for him; we in a word discover what we have to believe and what to practise. Without such a light to direct our steps we had still remained in the dark labyrinth of infidelity.

The functions of our blessed Saviour's mission were confined to the Jewish nation. There he was born, there he lived, there

he preached, there in confirmation of his doctrine he wrought his miracles, and there upon a cross he died for the world's redemption. Being to reign in the hearts of all true believers, and his kingdom being to extend over the earth by the faith of converted nations, he commissioned his Apostles with that plenitude of power, which he had received from his Father, to go thro' the whole world, and to preach his Gospel to every creature.\* To me, says he, † all power is given in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; instructing them at the same time to observe my injunctions, and to fulfil the precepts I have given you : for behold I am always with you even to the end of the world. Hence springs the visible succession of pastors and teachers in the Church, who with the authority and in the name of Christ himself continue to instruct, to govern and direct the flock unto eternal life.

\* Mark xvi.

† Mat. xxviii.

life. Who hears you, hears me, says he,\* and who despises you, despises me. Jesus therefore is in this our Saviour, because by providing us with a succession of living guides for our instruction and direction, he safely leads us through the plain and open way to salvation.

To all men, even to those, who are not yet come to the use of reason, baptism is essentially necessary to make good their title to everlasting life. Unless a man be born anew of water and the Holy Ghost, says our blessed Lord, † he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The baptised infant then becomes a member of the Church of Christ, and heir to the kingdom of heaven. To those, who are arrived at the years of discretion, it is moreover necessary for salvation, that they truly believe and profess the faith of Christ, when duly propounded to them. Whoever shall believe and be baptised, shall be saved, but whoever shall not believe, shall be condemned. § Behold, my Brethren, the absolute

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\* Luke x. † John iii. § Mark xvi.



obligation of submitting our judgments to the dictates of divine faith, if we hope to be saved. This faith, tho' so sublime in its object, is by its simplicity rendered easy to the lowest understanding by the aid of God's grace. This faith also is but one; it was taught us by Christ himself. Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life,\* is but one, he cannot be divided, he cannot in his Gospel teach contradictory articles of belief. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. † And since this one faith is so essential to salvation, that it is impossible to please God without it, ‡ our blessed Saviour in his wisdom has effectually provided, that it shall never fail.

“Simon, Simon, says our blessed Lord, § I have prayed for thee, that thy faith may not fail. Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, || because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father, who is in heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, which is to say a rock, and upon this

\* John c. xiv. † Eph. c. iv. v. 5. ‡ Heb. c. xi. v. 6.

§ Luke xxii. || Mat. xvi.

this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her." This divine prediction is fully verified by the establishment of that one, that holy, that Catholic, and Apostolic Church, which in spite of all opposition has stood unshaken and unhurt from the primitive down to the present times. Like another ark, rising in triumphant majesty above the waters of infidelity, which had deluged the whole world, she opened her capacious bosom to take in all those, who by the mercy of our Redeemer were predestined to everlasting life. Here crowding nations in obedience to the word of God sought salvation, and rejoiced to find it. Here under one supreme head, the spiritual Vicegerent on earth of Christ our Lord, they continue to form one compact body of true believers, all united together, as the Apostle expresses it,\* in one uniform profession of the same faith, in one uninterrupted communion of the same worship, same sacraments and sacrifice. For Christ, ascending on high,  
says

says the same Apostle, † bestowed his gifts on men in different degrees and for different functions, but all for the purpose of perfecting the work of his ministry, and of completing his Church in all its parts. Therefore some he gave to be Apostles, some Prophets, others Evangelists, others Pastors and Doctors, till we all meet in the unity of faith ; so that we may not be tossed to and fro, nor carried about with every wind of doctrine, like children, floating as it were upon the waves of popular opinion, the dupes of crafty and deceitful preachers. For such preachers have in every age gone forth, who full of themselves and elate with pride, have unwarrantably presumed to interpret by their own private authority, what to private authority, as St. Peter tells us, || does not belong, and have consequently wrested to their own perdition certain parts of scripture, in which there are some things hard to be understood. § Not so the humble and docile Christian, who for the solution of his doubts and difficulties hears the

† Eph. iv.

|| 2 Peter 1.

§ 2 Peter 3.

the Church. From her hand he receives the inspired writings, and to her judgment he looks up for instruction in the true meaning of them, being fully convinced, that in teaching the truths of salvation she is guided by the Spirit of truth, who shall remain with her for ever, ¶ and according to the promise of Christ shall teach her all truth.\* Under this guidance he knows he can never be misled, under this direction he knows he can never stray, with this light he knows he can never be deceived.

But the mark of our blessed Saviour's fatherly and most tender care for his flock perhaps no where so strongly or so amiably appears as in the institution of his holy sacraments. The sacraments are certain visible signs and instruments of grace, which in virtue of their institution by Jesus Christ they infallibly confer upon the worthy receiver. They are seven in number, as the Catholic Church has constantly taught conformably to the holy scriptures; and tho'

¶ John c. xiv.

\* C. xvi.



tho' all of them are not necessary for all men, yet each of them is ordained for an end peculiar to itself, so that each Christian according to his state may be duly sanctified. For by the sacraments, as long as they meet with no obstacle from us, our souls are really sanctified, and all our spiritual wants provided for from our very infancy to the grave.

1st. By Baptism we are washed from the stain of original sin, and born anew to God.\* 2d. By Confirmation we are fortified with fresh graces, and enabled by the holy Spirit, which is then given us, § to stand firm in the profession of our holy faith. 3d. By the Eucharist we are fed and nourished unto everlasting life, with the precious body and blood of Christ himself. † 4th. By Penance we are absolved from the sins we commit after baptism, and are reconciled again to God. ¶ 5th. By extreme Unction we are furnished with special succours of divine grace for our last conflict in time of sickness, sweetly comforted

\* John iii. § Acts viii. † John vi. ¶ John xx.

forted and strengthened against the terrors of approaching death. † 6th. By holy Order the Church is supplied with a constant succession of Pastors and Ministers, not only for the spiritual government || and instruction of the flock, but also for the offering of the great Christian sacrifice\* and due administration of the other sacraments, as appears from the texts just referred to. By Matrimony in fine the marriage contract is sanctified, and the contracting parties are endowed with grace to discharge the duties of their state with fidelity, with affection, in sanctification and honour. ¶ Thus, my Brethren, has Jesus Christ amply furnished us with the means of sanctifying our souls, and thus with joy we draw the salutary waters of eternal life from the fountains of our Saviour, as Isaiah had promised ‡ on the part of God for ages before.

With grateful hearts then let us adore our Saviour God ; with the liveliest sentiments

† James v.    || Acts xx.    \* 1 Cor. xi.    ¶ Eph. v.  
 1 Theff. iv.    ‡ C. 12.

ments of true devotion let us humbly thank him for his wonderful mercies to us; but above all let us make it the constant study of our lives to fulfil the precepts he has given us, to follow the example he has set us, and to make sure our election to glory by faithfully concurring with those plentiful graces, which he has purchased for us by his most precious blood. He humbled himself for our sake, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.\* On which account God has exalted him and has given him a name, which is above every other name; that in the name of Jesus every knee in heaven, on earth, and in hell shall bend, and every tongue confess, that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.

\* Phil. ii.

DISCOURSE

## DISCOURSE V.

UPON THE EPIPHANY, OR MANIFESTATION OF  
JESUS CHRIST.

*We have seen his star in the East, and are  
come to adore him. Mat. c. ii. v. 2.*

THE birth of Jesus Christ was a subject of common joy both to Jew and Gentile. Both were equally informed, and both invited at the time to come and partake of the common blessing. For at the same time, that it was announced to the shepherds of Bethlehem by a melodious multitude of the heavenly host, it was also manifested to the nations of the east by the miraculous appearance of a new star. Our blessed Lord being born for the salvation of all men, he mercifully ordained that all ranks of men should begin to know him in the very infancy of his assumed humanity. The rich and poor, the wise and ignorant, Israelites and heathens, kings and subjects, were promiscuously called to Bethlehem,  
there



there to own and adore the divine Infant. Nations sitting in the darkness of infidelity were suddenly roused by a wonderful light from heaven, and while the splendour of a new planet drew the attention of their outward senses, the beams of inward grace darted conviction on their minds, and prompted them to seek the truth, which in so persuasive a manner was manifested to them.

The miraculous summons of the three kings to the crib of Jesus Christ was at once the presage and beginning of that more extensive call, which has brought the nations from every quarter of the globe to the knowledge and worship of the true God. The blaze of that extraordinary star, which conducted the Magi from the east, has not since appeared, because it is no longer necessary for the direction of men in their search after truth. There is another light more general and more permanent, by which our merciful God has dispelled the darkness of infidelity, and made salvation shine on all the earth.

By

By the ministry of his holy word the mysteries of faith have been announced from the rising to the setting of the sun. The Gospel has been preached to the most discontiguous nations, and its doctrine has been spread even to the extremities of the globe. This is the word of faith, which we preach, says St. Paul: \* this is the light of faith, compared by St. Peter || to a shining lamp, which has been lighted up in the bosom of the holy Catholic Church, and continues to diffuse its purest rays of doctrine thro' every clime. A light, which shines upon and directs our reason in submitting to the doctrines of revelation; a light in fine, which teaches us what God in his mercy has done for man, and what man in return has to do for God.

Man being created solely for God, what has he else to do, but to follow and to worship his Creator? To know and fulfil the will of God is the whole and sole duty of a Christian. It is the summit and perfection of true wisdom. Of this wisdom a more instructive

\* Rom. x.      || 2 Eph. i.

instructive model never was exhibited than in the conduct of the three kings. Their obedience to the divine call was as prompt, as their faith was unshaken and constant. The precious gifts they offered denote the purity of their belief, and distinguish them for true adorers of the living God in spirit and in truth.

God no sooner made himself known to them, than they put themselves in readiness to fulfil what he commanded. He commanded them not only to believe in the Incarnation of his eternal Son, but likewise to seek and adore him in a foreign land. The mystery was far above the reach of human understanding; but implicitly relying on the infallible word of God, who neither can deceive nor be deceived, they firmly believed what their eyes could not witness, and publicly professed what their senses could not comprehend. Such is the conduct of true believers in submitting to the authority of divine revelation. Being once assured that God has spoken, they readily embrace and believe the sublime truths

truths of Christianity, as they are held forth by the holy Catholic Church, in which all faithful Christians devoutly believe.

The enlightened Magi being thus strongly grounded in the first principle of duty to God, whose wisdom they knew to be equally infallible as it was wonderful and holy, they required no other motive to rouse their faith into action. They suffered no human views and no worldly interest to retard the service they owed to God. They sought no excuse from the difficulties and expence, that must necessarily attend a long and laborious journey into a distant country they were strangers to. They might have pleaded the inconveniencies, to which they exposed their people in their absence, or the dangers, to which they exposed their own persons, amidst the jealousies of the Jewish nation. To worldly policy these considerations would appear of great consequence; and they most probably were, on that occasion, enforced with much ingenuity, and plausibly supported by a show of refined argument. Under the specious pretence of human



human prudence, the Magi might have sat themselves down to contemplate the beauty of the star, content like many others with a speculative knowledge of the truth, that was revealed. But they then had stifled the grace of their vocation ; they then had frustrated the designs of providence, and had never profited by the mercy of their Redeemer. The appellation, under which they are known in holy writ, denotes them to have been wise and discerning men in their own country, and by the supernatural lights they had already received, they undoubtedly saw, that a bare knowledge of truth without the practice could only serve to render their inaction more culpable. Therefore, they no sooner knew the will of God, than they followed his call. God spoke, and they instantly obeyed ; they saw his star, and they came.\* The promptitude of their obedience is so much the more meritorious, as before that day they had never been apprised of the mysteries of an incarnate God, nor explicitly taught  
the

\* Mat ii.

the sublime truths of his religion. A zeal so active, and an obedience so docile to the divine call, is a lesson of important instruction to those, who desire to serve God in spirit and in truth. But to those, who rest satisfied with speculation without the practice of religion, it is a subject of keen reproach. With less difficulties in their way, with less risks to run, and less labours to undergo, how many christians fancy themselves excused from the duties of their calling, exempt from the practical part of their belief, and even justified in their habits of a soft and idle life?

Having been educated in the bosom of the Church, we, my brethren, have had the happiness to know Jesus Christ from our earliest youth: we have been instructed in his holy law, we have imbibed the principles of eternal truth. With the knowledge of the Christian faith we have been taught, how and where God is to be found. Instead of one, we have many lights, equally sure and equally visible for the direction of our steps in the way of salvation. We

have the sacred Scriptures, we have the authority of the Catholic Church, we have the example of innumerable Saints, the practice of ages, and the concurrent testimony of all christian nations under the sun. With all these advantages, let our will be only prompt and rightly disposed to follow the divine call, we can be under no reasonable apprehension either of losing our way, or of not finding the object of our religious pursuit. If doubts arise, if difficulties occur, if unforeseen trials start up, the steady and persevering conduct of the Magi will teach us how to act.

The star, which had appeared to them in the east, indicated the birth of a King of the Jews; they therefore proceeded straight to Jerusalem, the capital of Judea, where they might naturally expect to find him. They entered the royal city, and the star no longer appearing to direct their way, they had recourse to inquiry. Unskilled in the art of dissimulation, and unawed by the danger they were exposed to from the arbitrary hand of a jealous prince, such as Herod was, they confidently ask, where he

is, who is born King of the Jews ; openly declaring, that they had been apprised of his birth by the appearance of his star in the east, and that they were come with gifts to do homage to him. The unexpected arrival of three eastern Princes with a numerous train of attendants afforded subject of great wonder and speculation to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. But when the Magi were heard to declare, that the object of their coming was nothing less, than to do homage to a new-born king, the whole city was instantly in violent commotion. Herod being an alien by birth, and knowing, that he had no other title to the crown of Judah, than was given him by the Romans, thought himself personally affected by the declaration. His troubled mind was agitated with all the violence of suspicious jealousy and distrust, that ambition and the fear of losing his ill-gotten crown could inspire. His ideas being equally as gross as those of the carnal Jews, he could form no conception of a king, whose kingdom should be purely spiritual, and so concluded that the exalt-



ation of a new king in the Jewish nation must be his downfall, and the restoration of Israel to its former state of temporal independence.

Full of this apprehension, he was determined to take every necessary precaution, that worldly policy suggested for the security of his crown. His first concern was to inform himself of the place, where Christ the expected Messiah was to be born. For according to his earthly notions, he had no doubt, but Christ was the dreaded rival of his throne, whom he had to guard against. With this view he called together the chief Priests and Scribes of the people, to tell him the place specified in the sacred volumes for the birth of their Messiah. They told him, Bethlehem was the place, expressly mentioned by Micheas the prophet.\* But had those Jewish doctors been faithful in citing the whole text, Herod might have been satisfied at once, that he could have nothing to apprehend from a Ruler in Israel, whose functions were represented by the Prophet to be as purely spiritual,

\* c. v.

ritual, as his Person was divine. For divine must be the Person, whose going forth is from the days of eternity.† But in the confused hurry of temporal pursuits eternity is little thought of. Herod's next concern was to learn precisely, when the child was born; and this he thought might be certainly gathered from the time of the star's appearance to the Magi. He therefore called the Magi privately to him, examined them diligently upon the subject, and having drawn from them the intelligence he wanted, civilly dismissed them, with an order to bring him back an account, after they had found the Child, that he might also go and adore him. Traitorous hypocrisy! The subsequent massacre of the innocents plainly proves what his intention was; it was not to adore, but to destroy.

The Magi with pious haste bent their way, as directed, towards the town of Bethlehem, when behold the star, which they had lost sight of during their stay at Jerusalem, appeared again, and convinced them, that

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they

† C. v.

they had been all the while, and still were, under the immediate guidance and protection of divine providence. We may better conceive than express the glowing sentiments of their hearts on that occasion. Their joy was exceedingly great, as the Evangelist observes ; so that the nearer they came to Jesus Christ, the more lively was their hope, the more active was their faith, the more ardent was their love. They had seen the splendour of Herod's court, they had viewed the magnificence of the holy city, its stupendous temple and buildings. But in them all they discovered no charms equal to the charms of duty, no magnificence worthy of their present notice, no entertainment capable of drawing them from the more important object they had then in view.

The star continued its course to Bethlehem. When it came over the roof where the divine Infant was, it there stood still, and with a fixed stream of light pointed out to the Magi the object of their adoration. With all the emotions of pious joy  
and

and affection they entered the house, where they found the Child with Mary his mother. Humanly speaking they might probably have expected, that some distinctive mark of majesty would appear, or that some expressive ray of the divinity would shine out, and manifest the Child to be God, whom they came to adore. For such had the characteristic brightness of his star, such had the ancient Prophets, such had the living voice of the Jewish doctors announced him to be. But no external sign either of his divine or of his regal character could they discover in him. On the contrary the testimony of their senses concurred with the circumstances of the place, in presenting him as a child of distress, a child of misery, a child of affliction and tears. In his attendants, in his abode, in his accommodations and attire, nothing was to be seen but the strongest marks of humiliation, of poverty and want. The discouraging badge in fine of dereliction and suffering seemed to put him upon a level with the most abject and most forlorn among the sons of



men. From appearances so little consonant with the idea they had of the majesty of God, what thoughts was it natural for the Magi to entertain? Was there no room to fear, lest they had been misled by a fallacious light? No room to suspect, that they had been deceived by their Jewish guides? No room to doubt, whether after all their labours they had found the Child they sought?

The Magi, my Brethren, were too well grounded in the principles of true faith, to admit any such doubt. Their reliance on the authority of divine revelation was too firmly established to be shaken by outward appearances, or by the fallible evidence of their senses. Under the form of a newborn infant they believed an omnipotent and eternal God to be truly present. They were convinced, that under the veil of weak mortality infinite wisdom, infinite sanctity, and infinite greatness with all the other divine attributes lay concealed, and that the Child, whom they there beheld, was their God, the king of ages, the supreme ruler

ruler of the universe, the long-expected Saviour and Redeemer of mankind. Penetrated with this awful truth, they fell down prostrate upon the ground, and adored him. Then opening their rich treasures they made to him an offering of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Their offering was no less precious than mysterious. Gold is the tribute usually paid to kings and sovereign princes, and in this light gold was offered by the Magi to Jesus Christ. For as it is written in the Revelations,\* he is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Frankincense among other offerings was offered to God morning and evening in his Temple upon the altar of perfumes, conformably to his own directions given to Moses for that purpose.† The offering is still sanctioned by divine authority, according to the Revelation of St. John. Another Angel came, says he,‡ and stood before the altar, having a golden censer: and much incense was given to him, that he might give of the prayers of all the Saints

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\* C. xix. v. 16. † Exod. xxx. ‡ C. viii. v. 3.

upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the Saints ascended up before God from the Angel's hand. Incense therefore is a mystical offering made to God by his own appointment: and this the Magi offered to Jesus Christ, who declares himself and the Father to be one,\* the same indivisible and eternal God. Myrrh in fine, is one of those aromatic gums, which were commonly employed by the Jews in embalming the bodies of their dead. Of this pious duty we have an instance in Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, who had prepared a precious mixture of myrrh and aloes, for the purpose of embalming their crucified Lord, † before they laid him in the tomb. This dutious tribute to the humanity of Jesus Christ was anticipated by the Magi, when they laid their odoriferous myrrh at his feet. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh, thus jointly offered by them, mystically express the joint natures of God and man in the Person of Jesus Christ.

\* John x.

† John xix.

Thus did those inspired princes pay their religious homage to the infant Jesus; thus did they acknowledge him to be their God, and the sovereign Lord of the universe, true God and true man; thus thro' the cloud as it were of his humanity, which veiled the splendour of his divinity, did they discover the sun of eternal justice; thus in fine were they guided by the steady light of revelation to surmount every doubt and difficulty, that the world or their own weak senses might raise to shake their belief of so incomprehensible a mystery. It is not to be doubted, but they accompanied their offerings with the warmest effusions of their hearts, that religion could inspire. For it is the pious affection of the soul only, that renders our external homage acceptable to God. Without a right intention the most religious acts are but empty show and Pharisaical parade.

The homage, paid by the Magi to Jesus Christ in Bethlehem was the dictate of true religion, prompting them to adore God in spirit and in truth. The same spirit, my



Brethren, must also animate us, if we are sincere in our profession of serving and honouring the same God. By that all-comprehensive goodness, which excludes no people and no nation from mercy, we have been equally called, as the Magi were, into the admirable light of divine faith. This faith has been solemnly announced to the world by Jesus Christ himself; it has been confirmed by innumerable miracles; it has been delivered down to all succeeding ages by the inspired Evangelists; it has been preserved in its first unalterable purity within the bosom of the Catholic Church; it has in fine been embraced and professed by whole kingdoms and empires, and in that profession have all those steadily persevered, who entertained a due sense of the great mercy shown them. This great, this inestimable, this divine gift of faith, has by a special Providence been bestowed on us.

Therefore great, my Brethren, is the tribute of adoration, which we owe to our gracious God in return for so singular a mercy.

mercy. The tribute of love, the tribute of devotion, the tribute of self-denial, are the three acts of homage signified by the gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which the Magi offered to the divine Infant. This homage God exacts from every Christian.

1st. Gold, being the most pure of all metals, may on that account be said with the greatest propriety to represent charity the most pure, and most perfect of all virtues. Many zealous Christians daily make a sacrifice of their gold, as a mark of the sincere love they bear to Almighty God. Thousands of both sexes by solemnly renouncing their title to all private property, devoutly conform to the religious counsel of our blessed Saviour, who tells them,\* if they wish to be perfect, to part with what they possess in favour of the poor, then to come and follow him. But this being no more than a bare counsel of the Gospel, addressed to such only, as are called to serve God in a more perfect state, is no tribute of obligation imposed upon Christians in

\* Mat. xix.

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Therefore great, my Brethren, is the tribute of adoration, which we owe to our gracious God in return for so singular a mercy.

mercy. The tribute of love, the tribute of devotion, the tribute of self-denial, are the three acts of homage signified by the gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which the Magi offered to the divine Infant. This homage God exacts from every Christian.

1st. Gold, being the most pure of all metals, may on that account be said with the greatest propriety to represent charity the most pure, and most perfect of all virtues. Many zealous Christians daily make a sacrifice of their gold, as a mark of the sincere love they bear to Almighty God. Thousands of both sexes by solemnly renouncing their title to all private property, devoutly conform to the religious counsel of our blessed Saviour, who tells them,\* if they wish to be perfect, to part with what they possess in favour of the poor, then to come and follow him. But this being no more than a bare counsel of the Gospel, addressed to such only, as are called to serve God in a more perfect state, is no tribute of obligation imposed upon Christians in

\* -Mat. xix.



in general. Salvation may be obtained without it. But the obligation of loving God above all things, and of loving our neighbour as ourselves, is a tribute, which every Christian in every station and rank of life is strictly bound to pay. There is no going to heaven without it. Who loves not, says the beloved Apostle, † remains in death. Without this essential virtue all other virtues have no merit, and no value in the sight of God. The most sublime knowledge of heavenly things without charity, tho' uttered by the tongue of an Angel, is but as the empty sound of a tinkling cymbal.\* Faith, altho' it were strong enough to remove mountains, if not accompanied with true charity, is nothing. The sacrifice even of fortune in alms-deeds to the poor, or of life itself to the flames is of no profit to a man, who has not charity.\*

The virtue of charity being thus so eminently great and at once so necessary to sanctify every other virtue, it is of essential consequence to know in what it precisely consists.

† 1 Ep. iii.

\* 1 Cor. xiii.

consists. It consists in a constant habit of loving and preferring God above all things, because above all things he is in himself deserving of all love. This constant habit of a pious will, which is founded in the knowledge we have of God's most amiable perfections, makes us always ready to do his will, always inclined to keep his commandments, and consequently always prepared to sacrifice every human consideration rather than forfeit his friendship by consenting to any grievous sin. Hence it often bursts out into the most fervent acts of divine love, and expresses its tender devotion in the following or in some such words. Great God, how incomprehensible is thy glory! How infinitely holy is thy goodness! How lovely are thy boundless and everlasting perfections! I love thee, Lord, for thy own sake, with my whole heart; by reason of thy own supreme excellence, which appears so wonderful in all thy works, I desire to love thee with all that ardour of affection, with all that effusion of heart, with all that intenseness of soul,  
which

which animates thy Angels and Saints in heaven.

But our love of God, to be sincere, must extend also to the love of our neighbour, because our neighbour is made as well as ourselves according to the image of God, redeemed by the same blood of Jesus Christ, and designed originally for the same glorious end of possessing God for ever in his kingdom. For whoever loves not his brother, whom he sees, says St. John,\* how can he love God, whom he sees not? And this is the commandment we have from God, that whoever loves God, must also love his neighbour. This commandment prompts us to embrace with benevolence all mankind as our brethren, and this commandment we religiously fulfil as long as we make it our practice in life to do good to all men and to injure none.

2dly. Devotion is the second tribute we owe to God, as it is specified by the frankincense, which the Magi offered to Jesus Christ. Our devotion to God is expressed in

\* 1 Ep. iv.

in general, by a fervent attention to the things, that regard his service, but more particularly by the exercise of holy prayer. Lord, says the Psalmist, \* let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight, and the lifting up of my hands be as an evening sacrifice. The hallowed smoke of incense arising from the burning coals most palpably expresses the warmth of heart as well as the elevation of mind, that should always accompany our devotions to God. For by devout prayer we honour God as the sovereign Lord of all things, and the supreme giver of all good gifts. By prayer we acknowledge our total dependence on him at the same time, that we profess his absolute dominion over all creatures. By prayer we humbly expose our wants to him, earnestly begging to be blessed with good things, and to be preserved from evil. The conscious knowledge we have of our own weak selves, and the daily help we stand in need of to restrain our passions, to check the assault of temptations, to defeat the force of our spiritual

\* Psalm cxl.



ritual enemies, and to bear the difficulties, that occur in the course of our Christian warfare through life, lays us under an indispensable obligation of daily prayer. On certain days, that are commanded to be kept holy, there also is a more incumbent obligation of public prayer, which cannot be wilfully neglected without a formal omission of religious duty, and a positive disobedience to the divine precept.

3dly. Self-denial is the third tribute we owe to God, as specified by the offering of myrrh, made by the Magi to Jesus Christ. Myrrh is bitter to the taste; bitter also to self ease is oftentimes the duty we are commanded to pay to God. Religious duties are sometimes inconvenient, sometimes even painful to weary nature. On those occasions self-denial becomes a duty, and the injunction of our divine Master commanding us to deny ourselves and to take up our cross must be then literally complied with, if we chuse to rank with his faithful followers.\* It is an illusion to suppose,

\* Luke ix.

suppose, that we may conscientiously follow the dictates of a worldly and unprofitable life, as self-ease and fancy prompt us, or that we may innocently do or not do certain actions, as they suit our inclination or not. Whatever the service of God according to his divine precepts requires at our hands, that must be faithfully fulfilled, nor can it without breach of duty be neglected by us. To corrupt nature bitter may be the cup prepared and mixed by the hand of Providence. Providence designs it for the benefit of our souls. Prayer, abstinence, and fasting are seldom relished by the sensual man. Yet to make good his pretensions to the joys of heaven, his depraved appetites and irregular inclinations must be so far disciplined into order by those religious exercises, as is requisite to check their unruly sallies, and to bend them to the yoke of Christ.

Accept, O Lord, our most humble thanks, for the gratuitous light of salvation, which thou hast graciously made to shine upon us. It is a light, which we never could  
have

have discovered by any power, or have deserved by any merit of our own: a light, in comparison of which the utmost stretch of natural knowledge is but mere darkness: a light, without which we had remained bewildered in the shade of infidelity, and bereft of the cheering rays of eternal life. But such is still our blindness, and so delusive are the objects round us, that without thy watchful Providence over us, we are hourly exposed to the danger of being misled by some false light, and of straying from the end, for which thou hast made us. We no longer want the extraordinary light, which guided the steps of the Magi. We have Moses and the Prophets for our direction; we have the Gospel and the Church, which thou hast commanded us to hear. Deign then most gracious God, so to enlighten our minds by the bright infusions of thy holy grace, and so to soften our hearts by the unction of thy holy Spirit, that we may ever understand thy law, and be docile to thy commands.

DISCOURSE

## DISCOURSE VI.

UPON THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS CHRIST IN  
THE TEMPLE.

*Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the  
resurrection of many. Luke c. ii. v. 34.*

**A**MONG the many religious laws delivered by Moses to the Jewish people there was one, by which it was ordained that every male child, the first-born, should be reputed holy and consecrated to God. Forty days after his birth the child was carried to the Temple of Jerusalem, and there solemnly presented to the Lord, at the same time that the mother performed the religious ceremony of her own purification, as the law directed. To comply with this twofold ordinance the Virgin Mary and Joseph her spouse repaired to the Temple on the appointed day, carrying with them a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons, the one a holocaust, the other a sacrifice for sin. Tho' sprung  
from



from the royal house of David and united with a man of the same illustrious pedigree, Mary disdained not to put herself upon a level in performing her religious duties with the lowest of her sex. No affectation of rank, no privilege of family hindered her from appearing with the humble offering of the poor in her hands, a turtle-dove in the place of a lamb, which was the usual offering of the rich. Full of grace as she was, free from every blemish of sin, and proclaimed by the inspired Elizabeth to be the mother of our Lord, she complies like other mothers with the ceremony of purification, as tho' she were not singularly blessed among women, as tho' the fruit of her womb had not been by virtue of the Holy Ghost, as tho' her Son had been no more than a meer lineal descendant of Abraham, and not the only-begotten of the Father before all ages.

There was then living in Jerusalem a man, called Simeon, just and religious in all his ways. By divine inspiration he had been assured, that death should not close  
his

his eyes, before they had seen the long-expected Messiah, the great Anointed of the Lord, the promised Consolation of Israel. Full of this longing expectation the venerable Sage came by a special impulse of the holy Spirit into the Temple, at the very time that Joseph and Mary brought in the Child Jesus. Ravished in spirit at the sight, Simeon took the divine Infant into his arms, blessed God, and said : " Now thou doest dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace, since mine eyes have seen thy salvation. Behold the Saviour, whom thou hast sent in sight of the whole world, a light for the illumination of the Gentiles, as well as for the glory of thy people of Israel." He then blessed the parents, who stood wondering at the things he uttered concerning the Child, and addressing himself to Mary his mother, he said : " Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many, as will appear, when the different thoughts of men's hearts shall be disclosed."

Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, as St.  
John

John assures us,\* came in human nature amongst his own chosen people, and they received him not. By reason of their obstinate incredulity they fell into disgrace with their merciful Redeemer. His sacred blood, as they loudly cried out to Pilate,† began even then to lie heavy on them, as it still continues upon their children to the present day. The fatal blindness which befel that perverse race, has more or less befallen other people, who have been either deaf to the word, or enemies to the cross of Jesus Christ. In these polite days of worldly refinement the ancient virtues of the Gospel are become unfashionable. To modern philosophy the yoke of Christ appears intolerable, and his law incompatible with the vaunted rights of man. Many affect to believe scarce any thing of religion, and of those, who believe something, few there are, comparatively speaking, who pay any great attention to the practical duties of their Christian profession, while others openly engage in habits incompatible with the

\* C. i.

† Mat. xxvii.

the purity of their belief. From principles and habits so repugnant to the law of Christ it is obvious to conceive, how Jesus Christ is become the occasional fall of many, tho' intended for the resurrection of all.

In several parts of the holy Scripture our blessed Saviour is mentioned as the foundation or corner stone, on which the whole spiritual edifice of man's salvation is built.\* This is the precious, and the living stone, as St. Peter speaks,|| chosen by God for the justification of those, who truly believe in him, but rejected by men to their lasting confusion, as it was by the carnal Jews, to whom thro' their own infidelity it became a stumbling stone, and a rock of scandal, the occasion of their final reprobation. Therefore, says ‡ our blessed Saviour to the Jews, in his explanation of these words, which are originally taken from the royal Prophet: † "the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a people yielding the fruits thereof." By their ob-

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\* Acts iv. || 1 Ep. ii. † Mat. xxi. ‡ Psalm cxvi.



stinacy in sin, the Jewish people drew down this heavy judgment upon themselves; with obdurate and ungrateful hearts they rejected Jesus Christ their Redeemer, and on that account Jesus Christ in his turn rejected them to make room for the Gentiles. Wondering nations then saw the light of salvation rise upon the heathen world, tho' out of the many even of them, who were called, there were only elect.\* But let no one from hence conclude, that God either wills not the salvation, or that Jesus Christ died not for the redemption of all men. To question the merciful designs of God, as if he had not sufficiently provided for the salvation of men, would be equally rash and impious. Nothing less than blasphemy would it be to suppose, that God either has not been able to effect his designs in the salvation of men, or that he has been deceived in his choice of the means, by suffering some to be lost.

No, my Brethren, God by the infinite perfection of his nature is all-bountiful, he  
is

\* Mat. xxii.

is all-powerful, and he is all-wise. His own greater glory and the final happiness of man has guided all his counsels and all his works, within the sphere of this sublunary creation. When he created man, he endowed him with the privilege of free will, and left it in his choice either to concur or not towards his own everlasting happiness. If man freely chuses to turn the divine gifts to his own ruin, man himself is alone accountable for the sinful abuse. In sending us a Redeemer after our fall, God has still left us the exercise of our free-will, which he gave at our first creation. Whatever may be the abuse we make of the glorious privilege we have received, the power of God can be never said to be controled by the weakness, nor his wisdom baffled by the perverseness of human malice. The grace of Redemption has been designed by infinite mercy for the resurrection of all, who had sinned in Adam. If any shall neglect to co-operate with that special grace, they themselves must answer for the neglect. Better for them would it be not to

have received the grace, than to abuse it by wilful neglect after having received it.

The blood of Abel cried to heaven for vengeance against the unnatural brother, who had spilt it. The blood of the ancient Prophets, whom God sent at different times to reclaim his people from their sins, lay heavy upon the ungrateful Jerusalem. But here it is the precious blood of the immaculate Lamb of God, that calls down a heavier punishment. The very thought of what was to befall that obdurate people, drew tears from our Saviour's eyes. "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! he emphatically exclaims, \* who killest the Prophets, and stonest those, who are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not? Or wouldst thou but now, even at the present favourable time that is offered thee, open thy mind and embrace the means of thy reconciliation with God! But unhappily these things are hidden from thy sight, and

\* Luke xiii.

and thou art blindly bent on thy own destruction. For this reason the day of desolation shall come upon thee. Because thou hast not known the time, when God visited thee with mercy, behold thy enemies shall encompass thee with a trench; they shall enclose and straiten thee on every side; they shall beat thee to the ground and thy children, that are in thee; thy dwelling shall become an abandoned desert, nor shall so much as one stone be left upon another. ||”

Alarming, my Brethren, is this threat, which Jesus Christ then uttered with tears against the sinful Jerusalem: he uttered it in punishment of her crimes, for not receiving him as her Redeemer, and for her obduracy of heart in rejecting the known truth. This threat was literally executed by the Roman arms, in less than forty years after our blessed Saviour's ascension into heaven. Jerusalem the ancient seat of religion, the chosen city of God, and by pre-eminence stiled the holy city, a city so celebrated by the inspired Psalmist, so re-

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H 3

nowned

|| Luke xix.



nowned for its Temple, and so venerable for its religious magnificence, is by the judgment of God swept off the earth, never to be built again. The wretched remnants of its inhabitants, that escaped the sword, are scattered thro' the nations, hardened and branded with disgrace in testimony of their fathers crimes.

Sinners, unfaithful to the call of God, should reflect, and then tremble at the awful example. The Jewish nation, the cherished nation once of the most High, rejected and murdered the Messiah! That nation has been chastened by the heavy hand of God in punishment thereof; it is extinguished and blotted out of the list of nations. Other nations, formerly buried in the darkness of infidelity, have wonderfully emerged into light, and believed in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, and Redeemer of the world. With a sincere and docile heart they believed for a time, 'till deceived by false teachers, they listened to new systems of faith, and yielding to temptations, which were flattering to flesh  
and

and blood, they by degrees mistook, and at last abandoned the genuine doctrine of Jesus Christ. What defections, what deplorable apostacies from the true faith has religion suffered in different times and places? The combined powers of schism and infidelity have invaded her empire, and drawn whole provinces and kingdoms into open rebellion against their mother Church. Their rebellion was at once the punishment and completion of their foregoing crimes. What is now become of the once flourishing Churches of Africa and Asia, where Catholicity shone for centuries with meridian lustre? Witness the bright virtues of a Cyprian, of an Austin, of a Basil, of a Gregory, of an Athanasius, of a Chrysostom, and of innumerable others, whose names are never mentioned but with honour in the Church of God. Their successors basely degenerated: they exchanged the ancient faith for new-fashioned doctrines; with deliberate obstinacy they persisted in their errors, and hence with the loss of faith lost even their existence of a

Christian people. Crushed by the weight of Turkish despotism, they are either wholly extinguished by the sword, or are doomed to drag out life in the most abject state of slavery and oppression.

For as the power of God had been exerted for the salvation of every one, who believes, says St. Paul,\* so likewise has his wrath been poured out by the most visible chastisements upon those, who notwithstanding their knowledge of the truth have dishonoured its Sanctity by their reprobate and wicked lives. Because when they had known God, they glorified him not as God, nor gave thanks, but were lost in their own imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened : for professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.† Striking, but instructive are these words of the Apostle. They equally regard both Jew and Gentile ; they are spoken to the unwise as well as to the wise.

A signal Providence, my Brethren, has watched over you from your earliest years.

Imbued

\* Rom. c. i.

† Rom. c. i. v. 22.

Imbued betimes with the principles of Catholic faith, you have learnt what a merciful Redeemer has done, and with what dispositions of infinite benevolence he has suffered for you. Beyond the possibility of a doubt you know on what rock your faith is built, how steady according to the divine promise, and how unshaken that rock has stood thro' every age, amidst the storms and tempests, which the powers of Hell have raised in vain to prevail against it. By maxim as well as by habit you have been taught to practise what it teaches. Most deplorable then would be your misfortune, if contrary to the lights of conscience you should prefer the works of darkness, or if against the conviction of your own mind you shall dare to dispute the truths, which Jesus Christ has so clearly established. Corozain and Bethsaida were two cities of Judea, highly distinguished for the many miracles, which our blessed Saviour there wrought for their conversion. Their incredulity frustrated his merciful intentions of their effect, and changed his



bounty into threats of the severest judgments. Woe to thee, Corozain, says he,\* woe to thee, Bethsaida, because if in Tyre and Sidon the same miracles had been wrought, which have been wrought in you, they had long since done penance in sackcloth and ashes. Less inexcusable therefore is their guilt, and less grievous will be their punishment in comparison of that, which is reserved for you in the day of judgment. And thou, Caphernaum, who hast been exalted by favours to the very sky, shalt descend even to hell for thy crimes. For if Sodom had been favoured with the miracles, which have been wrought in thee, she perchance had been moved to repent of her sins, and her repentance might have left her standing to the present day. For this reason I say unto thee, that at the day of judgment more indulgence shall be shown to the land of Sodom, than to thee. The graces, that were designed for thy salvation, are, thro' thy own fault, become the occasion of thy greater ruin.

Brethren,

\* Mat. c. xi.

Brethren, behold the precipice, to which a neglect of our Redeemer's graces evidently leads. Behold the frightful woes denounced by Jesus Christ himself upon all those, who refuse to concur with his gracious mercies. The men of Ninive shall rise up in judgment and condemn this incredulous people; because they did penance upon the preaching of Jonas, and behold more than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall also rise in judgment against the present generation and condemn them; because she came from the remotest parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold greater than Solomon is here.

Merciful Jesus, open the fountains of thy holy grace; for with thee there is great mercy and plenteous redemption. Little will it avail us to know what the ransom of our souls has cost thee, unless by thy special grace thou moreover enable us to profit by it. For without thee we can still do nothing worthy of everlasting life. Without thy efficacious aid all the desires of

salvation that our poor weak nature can form, will be wholly fruitless. The infused gift of divine faith, the knowledge of thy sacred law, the very offer thou hast made us of thy heavenly kingdom, will only serve to increase and manifest our guilt, if we neglect the tribute of good works, which thou imposest on us. Grant us then, O Lord, not only the power, but the will also to perform what thou requirest for our salvation. For all our strength, all our efforts, and all our desire even of doing good must come from thee, who art our only resurrection and our life.

Jesus is the light,\* that enlightens every man, who cometh into the world. † Without Jesus all is darkness, infidelity, and error. For he is the way, and the truth, and the life. † None can come to the Father but thro' him, and thro' him come all those, who are predestined to life everlasting. For in no other whatever is salvation to be had, nor is there any other name under heaven given to men, whereby  
we

\* † John c. i.

† John c. xiv.

we can possibly be saved. || To him the Lord has said, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask, and to thee I will give the nations for thy inheritance, and the remotest parts of the earth I will deliver into thy possession. \* " By the zeal of Apostolical preachers the name of Jesus Christ has been carried to the extremities of the known world, and by the conversion of infidel kings and nations Jesus has extended his spiritual kingdom far beyond the most extensive empires of antiquity: Barbarous tribes and nations, people of every language and of every country under the sun have bowed their necks to the sweet yoke of Jesus Christ. Enlightened by the truths of Christianity, they have emerged from the dark abyfs of infidelity, and are become an instructive light to the world. Let us lift up our minds to the heavenly mansions, and in thought behold the innumerable host of blessed Martyrs, Confessors, and Virgins, robed with glory, and shining like so many glowing stars with the rays of immortality. These



These are they, who once like us were sojourners in this vale of tears, who worked their way thro many tribulations, who passed through the world without following its corrupt maxims, but kept their souls undefiled and washed them clean from sin in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night. They shall not hunger nor thirst any more. Because the Lamb shall rule them, and shall lead them unto fountains of living waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.\* The number of these blessed souls now reigning with Christ in heaven far exceeds all calculation, and most amply verifies the prophecy of Simeon concerning him.

But however honourable to God or comfortable to us it may be to know, that Jesus is our resurrection and the foundation of all our hope, yet that knowledge will avail but little, unless we moreover consider and apply the means, which are requisite for us to profit by it. Unless the Son of God  
had

\* Rev. c. ii.

had become man, it never would have been possible for us since our fall in Adam either to deserve or to gain heaven. This is a most certain truth. It is no less true, that we shall no otherwise make our title good to heaven, than by the practice of those virtues, which he has taught us by word and example. Jesus Christ therefore is the resurrection of many, not only because he has given them the power, but also because in his own sacred humanity he has traced out the way and specified the means of our sanctification. For not by his merits alone, but by the joint concurrence of our own good works with his grace, and thro' his merits the kingdom of heaven is to be obtained. By Adam we had fallen from a state of original righteousness into the corruption of sin, and by that sin the whole human race was vitiated in its very root. By Jesus Christ we are again raised to a state of reconciliation with our offended God. To his boundless love for man it seemed not enough to redeem us by his blood

blood, unless he should likewise train and form us to virtue by example.

Pride, self-love, and a fond propensity to indulge the inordinate desires of corrupt nature had so possessed the heart of man, that they naturally carried him to such excesses, as were no less injurious to God than detrimental to his own soul. To break the force and to check the fallies of those inbred passions, which grow up with us from the earliest years of life, our blessed Saviour has delivered the most positive precepts, and those precepts he enforces by the example he has set us of the opposite virtues. Humility, self-abnegation, and an entire submission to the divine appointments, however inconvenient or painful, are the virtues, of which he has given us a bright example in his nativity, in his circumcision, and flight into Egypt. On the fortieth day after his birth he would be presented, as the law directed, to his Father in the Temple of Jerusalem: thither he regularly went with his religious Parents on the stated festivals of the year; there

there he used frequently to pray, and there after an absence of three days he was found by his blessed Mother. Thus by example he enforces the great duty of honouring God by frequent prayer, of making to him an early offering of ourselves and of all we have, of attending the divine service, and of sanctifying by public worship those particular days, which he has commanded to be kept holy. From the twelfth year of his age to the thirtieth, the Gospel records nothing more of him, than that he went with his Parents to Nazareth, and was subject to them.\* The domestic duties of a private life, far remote from the cares and noise of worldly pursuits, are in this short sentence more powerfully recommended, than they could possibly have been by the most flowing periods of human eloquence.

Jesus in the form of an humble penitent left his lowly retreat at Nazareth, and went to the river Jordan to be baptised by John, before he manifested himself to the world. Awed with respect, the Baptist at first withheld

\* Luke c. ii.



held his compliance, till he was told, that so it was necessary to fulfil all justice. † For the accomplishment of virtue was no less the object of our Saviour's mission, than the destruction of sin, that so he might become the resurrection of many. Being baptised, he was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, ¶ where for the space of forty days he set us the example of self-recollection and fasting. By his followers, who professedly believe in the holy Catholic Church, the example cannot be thought either insignificant or superfluous. The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of the Angel Raphael, had long before declared the prayer to be good and salutary, which is joined with fasting.\* The example of our Saviour God powerfully animates his faithful servants to the practice. When he had fasted forty days, he was pleased for our further instruction and encouragement in the divine service, to let himself be tempted by the devil. Knowing that the life of man is a constant warfare upon earth, and that in the midst

† Mat. iii.

¶ C. iv.

\* Job c. xii.

of various objects, which tend either to deter us from virtue or to allure us into sin, we must necessarily struggle for our duty, he condescended to teach us how and with what arms we are to conquer. He then entered upon the course of his Evangelical life, which was one continued series of hardships, labours and sufferings in promoting the salvation of men, and the glory of his heavenly Father. The doctrine he taught is equally holy in its precepts, as it is sublime in its design. Its precepts mark out to us every moral and religious duty, that we owe to God, to our neighbour, and ourselves. Its design is to lead us to real happiness both in this life and the next. That doctrine he confirmed by innumerable miracles in favour of the sick, of the blind, of the deaf and dumb. In return for all this bounty to mankind he was ungratefully repaid with injuries and affronts. In the end he patiently submitted to die upon a cross for our redemption. On the third day after his death he rose again to life for our justification, assuring us thereby, that if we patiently

patiently suffer with him, with him we shall also rise triumphant and immortal. An immortal life of happiness in heaven is the promised recompence of our faithful services on earth: and that happiness our blessed Saviour took possession of, when on the fortieth day after his resurrection from the dead, he left the earth, and ascended into heaven, from the top of mount Olivet, in the presence of his disciples.

Thus has Jesus Christ displayed his wisdom, his goodness, and his power for the resurrection of man. Thus has he completed the great and wonderful work marked out to him by his eternal Father.\* Thus has he redeemed our souls from sin, and placed them again in the path, that leads to life everlasting. Thus is he become the Saviour and Redeemer of all mankind. In him and through him we all possess the means of being eternally happy. None perish but by their own fault. For thou art just, O Lord, and right is thy judgment. ¶

## DISCOURSE

\* John c. xvii.

¶ Psalm cxviii.

DISCOURSE VII.

UPON THE EUCHARISTICAL INSTITUTION OF  
JESUS CHRIST.

*The merciful and gracious Lord hath made a  
remembrance of his wonderful works: he  
hath given food to them, that fear him.*  
Psalm cx, v. 4.

OF all the sacred mysteries, instituted  
by Jesus Christ for the benefit of true  
believers, the blessed Eucharist is the most  
holy and divine. It is the most holy, be-  
cause it contains within itself the great  
Holy of holies, and nourishes the soul of  
the worthy receiver with the grace of eter-  
nal life. It is divine, because under the  
sacred symbols of bread and wine it really  
and verily comprises the divine author of  
its institution, Jesus Christ himself. Under  
the appearances of corporal food our blessed  
Lord has prepared a sacred banquet for the  
spiritual nourishment of our souls: under  
the pure appearances of bread and wine,  
he



he gives us the real substance of his body and blood, which, when worthily received, are the seed and pledge of future glory. Such, my Brethren, is the wonderful work of omnipotence, and such is the effusion of divine love, displayed in the holy Eucharist by our merciful Redeemer, in favour of mortal man. This is one of those sublime mysteries, which human reason without the help of divine faith could have never known. This is one of those revealed truths, which the Catholic Church first received from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself, and which she has since continued to teach thro' every age, grounding her belief on the power and veracity of God's eternal word.

It neither is my design or inclination at this time to discuss or controvert the various opinions, which different societies of the Christian persuasion have adopted on the subject of the holy Eucharist. Briefly to unfold the wonders, that are contained in this adorable mystery, and to declare the Catholic belief on this important point, as it has been handed down from the beginning

ning to the present time of Christianity, is the whole and sole purport of the following discourse.

Our blessed Lord being upon the point of concluding his mortal life by the voluntary oblation of himself upon a cross, resolved to leave mankind the most signal pledge of love, that infinite wisdom could devise, and infinite goodness could bestow. Upon the eve of his crucifixion, being at supper for the last time with his twelve Apostles, he movingly began to express the strong desire he had entertained of eating this passover with them before he suffered. For Jesus knowing, says St. John,\* that his hour was come, when he should pass out of this world to his Father, having loved his, that were in the world, he loved them to the end. To impress this comfortable truth on the minds of his followers, he solemnly instituted a sacred rite, which should not only stand as a perpetual memorial in his Church, but should likewise be the practical completion of all his other wonders

wonders for the sanctification of our souls. As a prelude to this divine institution, after the legal supper was over, he rose from table, put off his garments, girted himself round with a towel, poured water into a basin, and began to wash his Apostles feet. This unparalleled example of humility in Jesus Christ, this awful ceremony of washing the feet of his disciples before he would admit them to his sacred mysteries, the earnest desire he expressed of celebrating this particular passover with them, indicate something new, something great, something supernatural and divine, which he was meditating for the benefit and comfort of his faithful flock.

He had told them,\* that he was the bread of life, that he was the living bread, which came down from heaven, and that every one, who should eat of this bread, should live for ever. He had moreover promised to give them this living, this heavenly bread, of which the ancient manna, tho' by excellence called the bread of Angels,

\* John c. vi.

Angels,\* was only the figure. For the bread, said he,† which I shall give, is my flesh for the life of the world. Your forefathers eat of the manna and died, but who eats of this bread, shall live for ever. Our blessed Lord said nothing of the manner, in which he meant to communicate himself to them, and therefore his hearers began to murmur and to debate amongst themselves how it was possible for him to give them his flesh to eat. To God, my Brethren, nothing is impossible, and to the authority of his infallible word the humble Christian readily submits in believing those divine truths, which lie not within the reach of his corporeal senses. On this divine authority he professes to believe both the Incarnation and the Trinity, tho' equally incapable of comprehending either. The unenlightened Capharnaites believed neither the one nor the other: no wonder then, that they gave no credit to the words of Jesus Christ respecting the mysterious communication of his body and blood. But notwithstanding

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\* Psalm lxxvii.

† ibid.



their incredulity in this point, our blessed Saviour still persisted to enforce the same doctrine, which he repeatedly confirmed with a remarkable emphasis of expression. *Verily, verily I say unto you, unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink of his blood, you shall not have life in you. Who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath life everlasting, and I will raise him up in the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.*

Such, my Brethren, is the promise, which Jesus Christ made to his Disciples of giving them his body and blood for the food and nourishment of their souls. A promise expressed in terms so clear and unequivocal, that not one of his hearers had the least doubt of its real and obvious import. Some of them indeed called it a harsh speech, but St. Peter, in the name of the Twelve, pronounced it to contain the words of eternal life.

The very last evening he was to sup with his Apostles was the time he had fixed for the accomplishment of this wonderful promise

mise he had made them. Therefore after he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, he placed himself again at table, and made them a most admirable discourse. *He then took bread \* into his sacred and venerable hands, and he blessed and broke, and gave to his Disciples, and said, Take and eat, THIS IS MY BODY. And having taken the cup, he gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, THIS IS MY BLOOD of the New Testament, which is shed for many, unto the remission of sins.* St. Mark and St. Luke give the like account of this divine institution, agreeing with St. Matthew not only in the substance, but also in the very words employed by our blessed Saviour on that solemn occasion. So that if words may be allowed to convey the sense, which in their common acceptation they are generally held to convey, there can be no solid ground to doubt of our blessed Saviour's meaning, when he said, *This is my body, This is my blood.*

The doctrine of St. Paul upon this subject is literally the same with that of the

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Evangelists,

\* Mat. c. xxvi.

Evangelists, and this doctrine, as he assures us, he had neither received nor learnt from man, but by the immediate revelation of Jesus Christ himself. † *For I have received from the Lord, as he moreover tells the Corinthians, † what I have also delivered to you, That the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke it, and said, take ye and eat, THIS IS MY BODY: do this in remembrance of me. In like manner he also took the cup, after he had supped, saying, THIS CUP IS THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MY BLOOD. Do this, as often as you shall drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the cup, you shall show the death of the Lord, until he come. Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of our Lord. For the chalice of blessing, which we bless, is it not the communication of the Blood of Christ? And the bread, which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of our Lord? \** He, who eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment

† Gal. c. i.

† c. xi.

\* C. x.

*judgment unto himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord."*

Moved by these concurrent testimonies of holy writ, so often and so uniformly expressed in the same plain and unequivocal terms, the Roman Catholic Church universally believes and teaches, that the words used by our blessed Saviour in the institution of this divine Sacrament, are to be understood in their obvious and literal sense; consequently that under the outward forms of bread and wine he truly, really, and substantially gave to his Apostles his precious Body and Blood, for the nourishment of their souls unto eternal life: and when he subjoined the words, *Do this*, that he gave his Apostles the power and a command even to do the self-same thing, which he had just done, that is, to consecrate his Body and Blood with a grateful sense and lively remembrance of what he had wrought and suffered for them.

With this divine precept the Catholic Church has at all times religiously complied in her belief and practice. This is



the belief she was first taught in her infancy by the Apostles themselves, and this is the belief she has transmitted down to the present age, without interruption and variation. No allegorical sense in the plain words of our blessed Lord's institution was then thought of, no figurative construction was put upon them. That device was left for Zuinglius and Calvin of the sixteenth century. The holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church thro' every age understand the words of Christ in their obvious sense, and whenever they make the holy Eucharist the subject of their discourse, they positively assert the real presence, and expressly maintain, that the Body and Blood of Christ are therein truly and substantially contained under the form and appearance of bread and wine. The unanimous agreement of the Fathers upon this subject is honestly acknowledged by Luther,\* tho' he at the same time fairly owns, that he wanted not an inclination to deny Christ's real presence in the Sacrament. But he  
found

\* Tom. vii.

found upon examination the evidence of the Fathers upon this subject too explicit, too strong, and too unanimous to be contradicted. “Certainly, says he, || in so many Fathers and in so many writings, the negative might have been found at least in some one of them, had they thought the Body and Blood of Christ were not really present; but they are all of them unanimous in the affirmative.”

“The bread, which our Lord held out to his disciples, says St. Cyprian,† speaking of the supper of our Lord, being not outwardly and to the eye, but inwardly and in substance changed, is by virtue of the word made flesh.” “When the chalice, which is mixed, and the bread, which is broken, partakes of the word of God, says Irenæus, ¶ it becomes the Eucharist of the Body and Blood of Christ. St. Cyril of Jerusalem ‡ has these unequivocal words, “The bread and wine of the Eucharist, before the invocation of the adorable Trinity,

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¶ Page 391. † An. 150. ¶ L. 5. c. 2. Adversus Hæreses. 369. ‡ Catech: 1. An. 369.

were mere bread and wine; but after the sacred invocation the bread becomes the Body of Christ, and the wine becomes the Blood of Christ. For the bread of the Eucharist, says the same Father,\* after the invocation of the Holy Ghost, is no longer common bread, but the Body of Christ." On a certain occasion being at Cana of Galilee, "Jesus changed water into wine by his only will: || we wonder and believe. But is he not to be equally believed, when he changes wine into blood? Take and eat, says he, This is my Body, § and taking the cup and giving thanks, he said, take and drink, This my Blood. Now since he has thus spoken of the bread, and said, This is my Body, who will hereafter dare to doubt? and since he has so positively said, This is my Blood, who can ever doubt, so as to say it is not his Blood?" "No, says St. Hilary, ¶ there is no room for any doubt upon the matter."

The bread is sanctified by the word of God and prayer, as the Apostle teaches,  
and

\* Cat. 3. || Cat. 4. § Cat. 4. ¶ De Trin. L. 8. Ann. 335.

and is suddenly changed into the Body of Christ by these words, This is my Body, as St. Gregory Nyssen says.† “For if there be so powerful an efficacy in the words of our Lord Jesus, as St. Ambrose ‡ reasons, as to give existence to the things that had none before, how much more capable are they of working a change in the things that already exist? The heavens were not, the sea was not, the earth was not. But hear his words. He said, and they were made, he commanded, and they were created. Wherefore to answer thee, the Body of Christ was not there before the consecration, but I tell thee, that after the consecration there is now the Body of Christ.” Wherefore “let us always believe God says St. Chrysostom, || and not contradict him, tho’ that which he says, seems to contradict both our thoughts and our senses. For his word cannot deceive us, but our senses may easily be deceived. He never errs, but we are often mistaken. Since

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therefore

† Orat. Cat. c. 37, T. 3. An. 380. ‡ De Sacram. l. 4. c. 4. An. 374. || Hom. 83. in Mat. An. 398.



therefore he says, This is my Body, let us be fully persuaded of it."

To swell the page with further quotations from the Fathers would be equally tedious and superfluous. If any there are, whose curiosity or doubts lead them on to a more extensive search, they will find upon examination, that the whole body of Fathers, St. Basil, St. Hierom, St. Austin, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Fulgentius, St. John Demascent, St. Gregory the Great, Venerable Bede, St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Thomas of Aquin, unanimously profess and teach the same Evangelical doctrine. For they all ground themselves upon the pure and genuine text of the Gospel, which they invariably understand and explain in the literal and obvious meaning of the words. No figurative mode of expression, no metaphor, no allegory is so much as hinted at by any one of them. These Fathers, we must remember, were no less eminent for virtue, than for their learning in the different ages, in which they lived. They lived not in obscurity, their light shone forth to  
the

the Christian world, many of them sat upon the Patriarchal and Metropolitan chairs of the eastern and western churches, they were all members of the Roman Catholic communion; they are therefore to be considered not only as the public teachers, but as unexceptionable witnesses of a doctrine, which in their time was universally held and taught both by Greeks and Latins, that is, by the whole Catholic Church. And as they successively flourished at different periods of time, some gradually rising as others died away, their testimony forms one continued chain of evidence thro' every age, from the Apostles down to these latter days. The Church therefore as well by the writings of the Fathers as by the decisions of her councils, has never ceased to teach, that the obvious is the true and real meaning of the words, 'This is my Body, This is my Blood.' And the Church in her solemn definitions of the sense of God's holy word Christ has commanded us to hear under pain of being accounted as hea-

thens and publicans.\* Such was the stigma cast on Berenger,¶ Archdeacon of Angers in France, and the first, who ever had the boldness to contradict the Church in her primitive belief of the real presence. Such was the censure passed against Wicleff,‡ who about three hundred years after renewed the same error in England. Such was the sentence of condemnation passed upon John Hufs,|| who endeavoured to propagate the same heterodox opinion in the kingdom of Bohemia. Such in fine was the anathema pronounced against John Calvin,† who from the town of Geneva, diffused his poisonous positions over the neighbouring countries. Thus the cry of opposition against the ancient doctrine of the Church was no sooner raised, than reprobated by her in virtue of that supreme spiritual authority, which she has received from Christ. Hence the docile Christian, listening to and relying on this infallible oracle of truth, firmly believes the following doctrines, as so many articles of the Catholic Church.

\* Mat. c. xix. ¶ 1050. ‡ 1377. || 1414. † 1534. 1st.

1st. That in the Sacrament of the holy Eucharist the true and real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Redeemer is substantially contained under the outward appearances of bread and wine. For what our blessed Lord gave to his Apostles at his last supper under the form of bread, he declares to be his Body, which was to be delivered for them; and that, which he gave them under the form of wine, he declares to be his Blood, which was to be shed for them. Consequently, if credit is to be given to the sacred text, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ were no less real in one case than in the other; for they were identically the same in substance, tho' different in appearance.

2dly. That by virtue of the words of consecration, the whole substance of the bread is changed into the substance of the the Body of Jesus Christ, and the whole substance of the wine is changed into the Blood of Jesus Christ, nothing of either element remaining but their mere outward form. This wonderful change the Church  
has



has thought proper to express by the term of Transubstantiation, that is to say, the changing of one substance into another substance. Jesus Christ at Cana by a silent act of his will changed water into wine; \* and Jesus Christ at his last supper by a word changed wine into blood. The latter change no less than the former most certainly falls within the reach of omnipotence. That Jesus Christ could as easily work one change as the other, no one will deny, who believes him to be God, and that he has actually wrought them both, every Christian must confess, who believes his divine word.

3dly. That Jesus Christ gave not only the power but a command to his Apostles, and in them to their lawful successors in the Priesthood, to work the same wonderful change. For by telling them to do this, he undoubtedly told them to do what he had just done, and to do it in memory of him. Now what had our blessed Saviour just done? He had, as we have seen, changed bread into his body, and wine into his

\* John c. ii.

his Blood: and if his words have any meaning, this undoubtedly was the thing, which he enjoined his Apostles likewise to do. Almighty God is the absolute master of his gifts; he communicates and shares them out in what manner and to whomsoever he pleases, as he judges most suitable to his holy designs. To Moses, as we read in Exodus, † he gave the power of changing rivers into blood, for the temporal chastisement of the Egyptians; and can it be thought unworthy of the divine goodness to grant a similar power to the Priests of the new law, for the spiritual comfort of his chosen people in the sublime mysteries of religion?

4thly. That under every visible particle of the consecrated species Christ is actually present, whole and entire, that he therefore is in many different places at one and the same time. For since his resurrection from the dead he is become immortal and impassible,\* incapable of division and suffering any more. Wherever  
his

† C. vii.

\* Rom. c. vi.

his body is, there also is his blood, his soul, and his divinity, inseparably united together. These he now conceals under the forms of bread and wine, as he once concealed his divinity under the form of an helpless infant. Tho' hidden from our sight under the sacramental veil, yet we believe him to be as truly present to us, as he was to Magdalen under the appearance of a gardener. § We see him not with our eyes, but through his infallible word we know him by our hearing, which is the organ of faith. || Jesus being ascended into heaven, sits on the right hand of God, from whence he never departs, till he shall come to judge the living and the dead. Yet St. Paul assures us, † that after his ascension he was seen by him as he had been seen by the other Apostles. This could only be by Christ's being present in more places than one at the same time. After this shall weak man presume to say unto the Omnipotent, Thus far thou canst go, but no farther?

Such

§ John c. xx.

|| Rom. c. x.

† 1 Cor. c. xv.

Such, my Brethren, are the standing wonders, which our merciful Lord has been pleased to work for the sanctification of our souls in the institution of this divine Sacrament. The mystery far surpasses our comprehension, so does that of the Incarnation. But the same word of God equally vouches for the truth of both. Believing God to be, as he is, infinite in power, we know that he not only can, but that he also has wrought wonderful works infinitely beyond the ken of human understanding: and since by his holy word he clearly assures us, that he has thus exercised his power in instituting the Sacrament of his Body and Blood, let us humbly submit our judgment, as the Apostle teaches,\* in obedience to Christ. The power and veracity of the God, who speaks, is the ground and motive of our belief. That we are not mistaken in the true sense of his divine word, we have the authority of the Evangelists literally concurring with the Apostle in their manner  
of

\* 2 Cor. c. x.



of expressing it, we have the agreement of all the holy Fathers, we have in fine the loud and unerring voice of the whole Catholic Church, in every age and in every nation under the rising and setting sun.

DISCOURSE VIII.

UPON THE EUCHARISICAL SACRIFICE OF JESUS  
CHRIST.

*Thou art a Priest for ever, according to the  
order of Melchisedech. Heb. c. v. v. 5.*

**T**HE holy Eucharist by Christ's institution is both a sacrament and sacrifice. In virtue of that divine power, which he exerted at his last supper, our blessed Lord has bequeathed to us his precious Body and Blood for our spiritual nourishment, under the outward forms of bread and wine, as we have shown in the foregoing discourse. This outward form of corporal food is the visible sign of that inward grace, with which it feeds and nourishes the soul of the worthy communicant unto eternal life. In this light the holy Eucharist is considered as a sacrament. Hence by reason of its supreme excellence it is called the blessed and the holy Sacrament, the living Bread,  
and

and the Bread of life, which cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world.\*

The holy Eucharist being once consecrated by virtue of that power, which Christ delegated to his Apostles and their successors in the order of Priesthood, it continues to remain present upon the altar under the visible forms of bread and wine. It is therefore applicable to a different use from that of a sacrament, and with a due intention may be offered up to God in all the form and with all the sacred rites that attend a sacrifice. This is daily done by the Roman Catholic Church in her solemn Liturgy, commonly called the Mass. In this light the holy Eucharist is considered as a clean oblation, a true and real Sacrifice. Under this consideration it forms the subject of the ensuing discourse.

Sacrifice is a religious act of supreme adoration, due only to God, the supreme Lord and Sovereign Ruler of the universe. Being devoted by its very nature as well as by religion to the sole worship of the Divinity,

\* John c. vi.

Divinity, it requires no intention, no circumstances of time or place, to determine its object. No Angel, no Saint, no pure creature, however high in rank or dignified by grace, can claim or receive any share therein without the crime of idolatry. Therefore saith the Lord our God,\* *Thou shalt not have strange Gods before me. Ye shall not make to yourselves Gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto yourselves Gods of gold. Thou shalt not adore nor worship them.*

During the first four thousand years of the world, nature furnished the offerings for sacrifice out of her own productions, her fruits, her birds and animals. With these the ancient Patriarchs loaded the sacred altar, as piety inspired them, till a more explicit form of worship was revealed to Moses for the future observance of God's chosen people the Israelites. This manifestation of the divine will was awfully made on Mount Sinai soon after their miraculous escape from the land of Egypt. Then by God's own appointment was Aaron  
consecrated



consecrated High Priest; then in detail were specified the different victims, the altar, the ornaments, the sacerdotal vestments, the sacred vessels and religious ceremonies to render the service more solemn, and the sacrifice more awful. With these bloody sacrifices, when offered with a clean heart, God was pleased, and by them was often rendered propitious to a sinful people, as the Scripture testifies. But their institution was only for a certain time. Limited in their duration, they prefigured another sacrifice more acceptable and lasting: they prefigured the adorable sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross, who by the effusion of his precious blood has ransomed our souls from death, which the blood of bulls and goats could not effect.

The ancient law, according to St. Paul,\* was but an introduction to a better hope, by which we approach to God; for it brought nothing to perfection. On account of its inefficacy and weakness it was at length set aside to make room for the new testament

\* Heb. c. vii.

testament in the blood of Christ, the immaculate Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. That this was one day to happen, the Jewish nation had been long informed by the inspired writings. "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, says the royal Prophet, || speaking in the name of Jesus to his eternal Father, but a body thou hast prepared for me, as St. Paul expresses it. ¶ Holocausts for sin did not please thee; no longer wouldst thou accept the sacrifices, the oblations, and the holocausts which were offered according to the law. Then said I, *behold I come, as it is written of me, O God, behold I come to do thy will.*"

The rejection of Aaron's victims is here as strongly marked, as words can express. The precise time likewise, when those carnal sacrifices were to cease, is as clearly specified by the Prophet Daniel.\* "Seventy weeks are shortened upon thy people, said the Angel Gabriel to him, that sin may have an end, that everlasting justice may be

|| Psalm xxxix. ¶ Heb. x. \* C. ix.

be brought in, that prophecy may be fulfilled, and the Saint of Saints be anointed. Know thou therefore and take notice, that from the issuing of the order for re-building the walls of Jerufalem, to the time of Christ the leader, there shall be seven and fixty-two weeks. In the middle of the following week the victim and the sacrifice shall fail ; Christ shall be slain, and the people, who are about to deny him, shall be no longer his. By a foreign power their city and the sanctuary shall be destroyed. In the Temple there shall be the abomination of desolation, and the desolation shall continue even to the end." All these things, as the event has shown, have literally come to pass, in the manner and at the time mentioned by the Prophet.

Jesus Christ, the Anointed of the Lord, the Saint of Saints, has by his death redeemed the world from the bondage of sin, and opened to us the treasure of his own inexhaustible merits for the sanctification of our souls. Hence to all, who obey him, he is become the cause of everlasting salvation

vation, as the Apostle testifies,\* being called of God a High-Priest, according to the order of Melchisedeck. For the order of Aaron ceasing, when the Jews by the subversion of their laws and country ceased to be a people, a new order rose, as had been foretold, more holy and more perfect. Now since every High-Priest, according to St Paul, † is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices, it became necessary, that Christ also should have something to offer, and that for ever, according to the order of Melchisedeck. Conformably to his own divine ordinance he has his body and his blood, which under the appearance of bread and wine he daily offers by the visible ministry of his Priests of the New Testament. For they being his ministers, ‡ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God on earth, in his name and by his authority they perform the visible function of his everlasting Priesthood. For we have a holy Priesthood, as St. Peter calls it, ¶ established by divine authority to offer up spiritual

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\* Heb. v. † c. viii. ‡ 1. Cor. iv. ¶ 1 Ep. c. ii.



sacrifices acceptable to God thro' Jesus Christ. We also have an altar, || whereof they have no right to eat, who serve the tabernacle. Consequently we have a sacrifice, without which the altar would be but a needless thing, and the Priesthood no more than an empty name.

To glorify God, and to sanctify the souls of men is the noble and sublime design of true religion. Pursuant to this design Jesus Christ has instituted a religion the most holy in her doctrine, and the most awful in her form of worship. Perpetual sacrifice was therefore to hold the first place. For of all the public acts of worship, that man can pay to his Creator, the act of sacrifice is the most awful and most holy. This religious duty had been always paid, as the Scripture testifies, by all true adorers from Abel to the Machabees. In these latter days can sacrifice be less a duty of religion, or be less acceptable to God, than it was in the days of Moses and the Patriarchs? Can it be less honourable to  
God's

God's supreme dominion over all his creatures, or less expressive of man's thankful gratitude to God for all his benefits? The ancient sacrifices ceased at the appointed time; they were imperfect, and had been limited to one city, and to a single Temple. Jesus Christ therefore, who came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them,\* has instituted a more perfect system of religion without spot or wrinkle, a more awful priesthood, a more sacred altar, a more acceptable and more holy sacrifice; a sacrifice with no limitation of time or place but what the end of ages and the whole circumference of the globe shall fix.

Two orders of Priesthood are mentioned in the old Scripture, the order of Aaron and the order of Melchisedeck. Both were figurative; one transitory, the other permanent. Aaron of the tribe of Levi sacrificed in blood; Melchisedeck king of Salem and Priest of the most high God sacrificed in bread and wine.† The functions of the

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former

\* Mat. v.      † Gen. xiv.

former were not to last beyond a certain period of years, while the functions of the latter shall by God's decree be continued for ever. *The Lord hath sworn*, says the Royal Prophet, † *nor shall he repent of what he hath sworn, Thou art a Priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedeck.* Thus by the sanction of an oath the most solemn, for it is made by the eternal Father to his own eternal Son, Jesus Christ is invested with an everlasting Priesthood ; the sacrifice he offers is perpetual, and he offers it after the likeness of Melchisedeck. The sacrifice is divine, unbloody and immaculate. In a bloody manner he once offered himself upon the cross. The manner was after that of Aaron, by the effusion of his precious blood, never to be renewed again. The function then of Jesus's Priesthood, according to the order of Aaron is never to be repeated more ; the exercise of it ceased with his last breath, when he expired upon the cross. Christ having died once for us, he dies not again, says the Apostle,\*  
death

† Psalm cix.

\* Rom. vi.

death shall no more have dominion over him. Rising from the dead immortal and impassible, he is ascended into heaven, where he sits at the right hand of the Father, equal to him in glory, in power, and in all perfection.

Jesus therefore on the eve of his passion being at supper with his Apostles, as the Evangelists relate, began for the first time to exercise the function of his everlasting Priesthood, according to the order of Melchisedeck. He took bread and he blessed it, saying, THIS IS MY BODY. He in like manner blessed the cup, saying, THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins. The words are express, their meaning plain and obvious. Jesus our High-Priest by his powerful word changed the substance of the bread into his body, and the substance of the wine into his blood, leaving the outward form unaltered, that faith might have its merit. Under this form he first offered his body and his blood to the



eternal Father, says St. Cyprian, § and then empowered his Apostles to do the same. For whatever he had just done he commanded them to do. Do this, said he to them, and as often as you shall do it, do it in remembrance of me.\* By this wonderful act of divine power, he provided his Church with a visible sacrifice, the spotless sacrifice of his own sacred body and blood, which he then offered, and which he shall for ever continue to offer by the ministry of those, whom he calls to partake of his Priesthood.

This is the sacrifice, which from that time to this the Priests of the holy Catholic Church, in virtue of the power committed to them by Christ himself, have never failed to offer in every age and in every clime under the sun. This is the pure oblation, of which the Prophet Malachi thus speaks, † *From the rising to the setting of the Sun my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice and a clean oblation offered to my name : because great is*  
my

§ L. 2. Ep. 3. Ad. Cæcil.

\* 1 Cor. xi.

† c. i.

*my name among the Gentiles, says the Lord of hosts.* Of no other, than of the great Christian sacrifice in the likeness of that offered by Melchisedeck, can these words of the Prophet be possibly understood. For among the converted Gentiles, who had been once taught to worship the living God, this sacrifice has been always offered and no other. The fount of the Gospel has gone forth over all the earth. Nations stretching from one extremity of the earth to the other have heard and embraced the faith of Christ. Churches began to rise, altars were erected, and a clean sacrifice was offered to the name of God in every place, as Malachi had expressed. The expression of the Prophet is very significant and claims our special notice. In singling out the sacrifice and the clean oblation, by which the name of God was to be magnified amongst the nations, he leads us to the knowledge of this certain truth, that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is but one. For altho' it be daily offered by many Priests and in many places, yet it always is the oblation of the

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same body and blood of our Lord. Christ is not divided, neither is he, nor can he be offered up in part or by parts, but wholly and entirely. For he is one individual Christ, always entire, always perfect, always the same, unchangeable and immortal. "Tho' he be offered many times and in many places, says the learned and eloquent Doctor St. Chrysostom, † yet as it is the same body, and not many nor different bodies, so is it one sacrifice. He is our High Priest, who offered this sacrifice, by which we are cleansed ; we now offer up the same. He said, *Do this in remembrance of me.* We do it ; we offer not a different sacrifice, but the very same, that our high Priest then offered."

We should lessen the excellence and debase the dignity of Christ's institution, if we fancied, when officiating at the altar according to his divine ordinance, that we do any thing less or any thing different from what he himself had done, when he said to his Apostles, *Do this.* No, my Brethren,

† Hom. xvii. in c. x. Heb.

Brethren, let us rather listen to the inspired oracles of truth, than to the arbitrary conceits of men, who by straining the sacred text from its natural to a foreign sense, rob religion of its richest treasure, and themselves of their best spiritual comfort and support in the way to everlasting life. With an humble diffidence in our own understanding let us hearken to the Church, the sure and faithful interpreter of God's word. There we run no risk of being deceived. The Church, from her first existence, has always used the utmost diligence in collecting and preserving authentic records of her own wary conduct respecting doctrine and morals. Ever anxious to maintain the unity of faith, which she had received from the Apostles, she has constantly watched with a jealous eye the spirit of innovation, and never failed to censure and proscribe every new and foreign doctrine the moment it began to divide the faithful. Amongst her sons she has always had many living at the same time no less distinguished for their literary talents than



for virtue, men wholly estranged from all worldly pursuits, and solely addicted to the divine service, of whom some were Apostles, some Prophets, some Pastors, some Doctors and Teachers, who by the writings they have left, bear witness of the doctrine she has at all times believed and taught.

From these unexceptionable witnesses it evidently appears, that the Roman Catholic Church has uniformly taught, and that all of her communion have universally believed for near these eighteen hundred years, that in the mass is offered to God a true and propitiatory sacrifice, even the same, which Christ offered at his last supper and upon the cross: that it is one and the self-same oblation of the same body and blood of Christ substantially contained therein, and that the Chief Priest, who offers it, is likewise the same: that the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, and the sacrifice of Christ upon the altar is consequently the same, and differs only in the manner of offering. The one is therefore called bloody, because wrought by the visible effusion of blood; the

the other unbloody, because without the appearance of blood it is wrought under the pure elements of bread and wine.

Such is, and such has always been the Catholic doctrine respecting the adorable sacrifice of Christ's body and blood in the holy Eucharist. All the holy Fathers and primitive Writers of Christianity are clear and unanimous in their testimony upon this subject, as is noticed in the foregoing Discourse. To those, who are there quoted, let it be sufficient to join one or two more, who border upon the Apostolic age. Clement who had learnt his faith from the Apostles themselves, and was chosen the third Bishop of Rome after St. Peter to govern the whole Church, in his third Epistle upon the duty of Priests, specifies the sacrifice by the name of *Mass*, and having given his instructions for the due celebration of it, thus concludes : *These things the Apostles received from the Lord, and delivered to us.* Nineteen years after his death he was succeeded by Alexander the first,

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who in his first Epistle\* to all orthodox believers, speaks as follows : “ In sacrifice nothing greater can be offered, than the body and blood of Christ. Nor is there any oblation more excellent than this, which for its perfection above all others is to be offered to the Lord with a pure conscience, to be received with a pure mind, and to be venerated by all.” Full of this truth his successors Sixtus, Telesphorus, Hyginus, Soter, Fabian, and Felix have enacted ordinances, and left us their canonical directions for the due performance of that august sacrifice, which they expressly name the Mass.

These in succession were all sovereign Pontiffs, men no less eminent in sanctity than in dignity of rank among their brethren, enlightened teachers and zealous guardians of the Catholic faith, which they sealed with their blood. They sat in the chair of Peter, they spoke not in private, but in public, they spoke in their pastoral capacity to the whole world. Their testimony

\* C. iv.

mony forms one continued chain of indisputable evidence from the year 91, when St. John the Apostle and Evangelist was still living, to the year 275. From this evidence it appears beyond a doubt, that the Catholic doctrine of the Mass as well as the term itself is neither of modern date nor of modern invention, as some unskilled in the annals of antiquity have pretended. Thro' the clear and uninterrupted current of Apostolical tradition this doctrine has been conveyed to us from the source of truth, Jesus Christ himself.

But notwithstanding the authorities we have produced should any one still affect to doubt, let him turn to the great Council of Nice, the authority of which is denied by none, unless by those, who with the impious Arius, deny the Divinity of Jesus Christ their Redeemer. The Fathers of this celebrated Council, who were assembled from every part of the Christian world, in settling a point of discipline concerning the distribution of the holy Eucharist, authentically declare the ancient and universal belief of the



the Church with respect to this adorable mystery. Their eighteenth canon stands worded to the following effect: "By no rule or usage has it been delivered down to us, that they, who have not the power of offering, may distribute the body of Christ to those, who offer it." From this canon it is clearly ascertained, 1st. That in all the Churches of Christendom sacrifice was offered. 2d. That this sacrifice was that of Christ's body, which is the Mass. 3d. That it was offered by those only of the sacerdotal order, and not by Deacons, whose power went not to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, which was the Body of Christ, but to distribute it to the faithful after it was offered.

From testimonies so ancient, so explicit, so unanimous and universal, arise such powerful motives of credibility, that we must either give our assent, or resign our reason. But unfortunately for religion, such information is seldom sought, and perhaps still less considered. Early prejudice, human respects, and worldly interest, often hinder

hinder men from seeking to know what party zeal will not suffer them freely to profess. Afraid, as they may be, or unwilling to be dispossessed of an hereditary opinion, tho' modern in descent, they appeal from the plain testimony of God's holy word to the fallacious testimony of their own senses, little thinking, that such an appeal in a matter of faith can rise from no other spring than that of incredulity itself. Such was the appeal of Thomas the incredulous Apostle. *Unless I see*, said he,\* *I will not believe*. He was equally rash and obstinate in his protestation, for which he was deservedly rebuked by his divine master. He undoubtedly knew, tho' he did not reflect at the time, that faith is not from seeing, but from hearing, as St. Paul informs us.† Seeing is the evidence of our eyes, representing to our view the things before us. But as their representation may be false, as it often is, for what appears to be one thing is oftentimes another, so we are liable to be led into

error

\* John xx.      † Rom. c. x.

errour by it. Whereas faith is a firm act of our understanding, by which we believe what we do not see, grounded on the eternal veracity of God, who neither can deceive nor be deceived.

Eternal praise and benediction be to thee, O God, for the inestimable blessing bestowed upon us by thy Son Jesus our Redeemer, in the adorable sacrifice of his precious body and blood. Convinced by thy infallible word, with a firm faith we believe all thy Church teaches concerning this divine mystery. Herein we have not only a sacrament for the nourishment of our souls unto eternal life, but a sacrifice moreover the most august, the most holy, and the most acceptable that can be offered. It is the body, it is the blood of thy Son Jesus, in whom thou art well pleased. By this clean and unbloody sacrifice we honour thy supreme dominion over all creatures: by this we renew the memory, and apply the merits of his death and passion to our souls for the remission of our sins: by this we present thee with an offering  
worthy

worthy of thy acceptance, in thanksgiving for thy bounteous goodness to us: by this in fine we invoke thy mercy to shower down new gifts and graces on us and all thy people, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



THE doctrine of the cross of Jesus Christ at first sight appeared so repugnant to human pride, so opposite to the maxims of worldly wisdom, that it was embraced but by few. By the carnal Jews it was deemed a scandal, and by the Gentiles nothing less than folly. By men indulging in the habits of a soft and sensual life it may be deemed so still. In the faithful believer's eye it appears a mystery wonderful indeed, but abounding with heavenly wisdom and heavenly consolation. For by this he feels himself strengthened against the terrors of approaching death, anend-lived in his hope of everlasting life: by this his labours are softened in the practice of

of his duty, and his sorrows soothed under the burden of affliction. The life of Jesus Christ, from his baptism in the river Jordan to his death on Mount Calvary, was one continued series of labour, of fatigue, of contradiction and suffering, which he freely chose to undergo for our profit and example. For our redemption he was put to a death the most ignominious, that Jewish malice could devise, *because such was his own will*, as Isaiah assures us.\* ~~He opened not his mouth~~, he uttered no complaint. Mute as a lamb before his shearer he was led to slaughter, loaded with the iniquity of us all, which the Lord had laid upon him. For he was wounded on account of our iniquities, he was bruised on account of our crimes, and by his bruises we are healed. Upon this interesting tho' mournful subject as often as we employ our thoughts, and we cannot employ them too often, we should be careful to reflect, who suffered, what he suffered, and for whom he suffered. It was Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God, consubstan-

tial

\* C. liii.

tial and co-eternal with the Father and the holy Ghost, who suffered; he suffered a most cruel death, even the death of the cross, and he suffered for us sinners. The variety and excess of torments, which he freely chose to undergo in the course of his passion, strongly mark the enormity of our guilt on one hand, and on the other the force of his Almighty love.

Our blessed Lord having concluded the Paschal ceremony at his last supper, by the institution of the holy Eucharist, and an hymn being said, he went forth to the Mountain of Olives, according to his custom, and his disciples followed him. Being come thither, he took with him Peter, James, and John, into the garden called Gethsemani, telling the rest to stay where they were, and to pray for strength against temptation. He then began to be sorrowful and sad. For he then truly bore our infirmities, and carried all our griefs, as Isaiah had foretold. The scene of his approaching passion, the rage of his enemies, the treachery of Judas, the ingratitude of his

chosen

chosen people, and the general insensibility of mankind, crowded in all at once upon his mind, and pierced his soul with grief. "My soul," said he to his three chosen disciples, "is sorrowful even to death. But stay you here, and watch with me in prayer, that you may not enter into temptation." He then withdrew from them about the length of a stone's throw, and falling upon his knees addressed his heavenly Father, with this most fervent prayer: "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee, take away this cup from me: nevertheless not my will but thine be done." Here we see, that Christ, as man, naturally feared, and in the sensitive part of his soul had the feelings of sadness and sorrow, like us, but that his human will was ever most conformed to the divine. This interior anguish of mind flung him into a kind of agony, which forced from him an unusual sweat, trickling down in drops like blood upon the ground. To convince us that God never refuses his spiritual comforts to those, who voluntarily suffer for his sake, he

**suffered**



permitted himself to be comforted by an Angel from heaven ; and his agony being prolonged, he prayed the more.

But notwithstanding the tide of grief, that overwhelmed his soul, his thoughts were still turned upon his disciples. Knowing how frail and how little prepared they were against the impending storm, he rose from prayer and went to visit them. / Oppressed with grief, and wearied with the labours of the day, they had indolently fallen asleep. What, said he, were you not able to watch so much as one hour with me ? Arise, watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation. He then went back and prayed again in these words : “ O my Father, if this cup cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done.” After this he visited his disciples a second time, and finding them still sleeping as before, he sharply rebuked them for their drowsy and insensible neglect. They felt the justice of his rebuke, and knew not what to answer. He staid not long with them, but went and prayed a third time in the same words

words and with the same fervour, as he had twice already done. Having finished his prayer, he returned a third time to his disciples. Sleep now, said he ironically to them, and take your rest. The time for prayer is now passed, the hour of trial is at hand, the traitor approaches, and the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. And while he was yet speaking, behold Judas at the head of an armed multitude entered the garden. Without fear, without shame, and as it seemed without remorse, he went up to his divine master, and embraced him after the usual manner of the country. "Friend, said Jesus to him, for what purpose art thou come? Is it with a kiss, that thou betrayest the Son of Man?" For that was the signal agreed on by the traitor, saying, whomsoever I shall salute, that is He, seize and lead him cautiously away. Jesus therefore knowing what was to befall him, advanced forward and asked them whom they sought. And upon their answering, Jesus of Nazareth, he said, *I am he.* Struck at  
the

the awfulness of his voice, which bespoke his divinity, they drew back and fell to the ground; nor durst they, before he had given them permission, lay their sacrilegious hands upon him. Then the Tribune and his band, and the servants of the Jews, armed with swords and clubs, as tho' they had been sent to seize some daring robber, laid hold on Jesus and bound him. ~~Christi-~~<sup>have we</sup> ~~an,~~<sup>our</sup> how often at the head of thy unruly passions ~~hast thou~~ in like manner conspired against ~~thy~~<sup>have we</sup> Jesus? How often, like the traitor Judas, ~~hast thou~~ betrayed his cause, and trampled on the sanctity of his holy law? But that was their hour and the power of darkness.

The disciples, now seeing their divine master in the hands of his enraged enemies, yielded to their own weakness, and abandoned him at his utmost need. Peter had just courage enough to follow at a distance, as they were dragging him along in insolent triumph into the city, amidst the shouts and clamours of an outrageous multitude. How different was this his en-  
trance

trance from that he made but five days before into the same city of Jerusalem, when a joyous people, bearing in their hands branches of palms and olives, strewed their garments in the way as he rode along, crying, *Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he, that cometh in the name of the Lord?* These were the acclamations of a fickle multitude,\* the passing plaudits of a false world.

Bound and guarded by a band of soldiers, Jesus was led, like a notorious malefactor, first to Annas, and then to Caiphas the High Priest. There were the accusers and false witnesses drawn together, ready to slander and traduce him: there were the jealous Scribes, the Priests and Elders of the people assembled with malice in their hearts to judge and condemn him; there was our blessed Lord, the eternal wisdom of God, to be interrogated like a criminal, and judged by his own creatures. Caiphas began by questioning him about his disciples and his doctrine. Of his disciples he said nothing; and for his doctrine, he

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referred him to those, who had heard it in the Synagogue and Temple, having always spoken openly to the world. On this one of the assistants gave him a violent blow upon the cheek, saying, is it so thou answerest the High Priest? In weak man such an insult might have kindled an inextinguishable desire of revenge. But from Jesus, the sovereign disposer of life and death, it drew this meek reply, "If I have spoken evil, give proof of the evil; but if well, why dost thou strike me?" Then were his accusers called upon to prove all they could against him. But so irreproachable in all things had been his conduct, and so pure his doctrine, that not the shadow even of any thing wrong could be discovered either in one or in the other. Many allegations were indeed advanced, but on no other foundation than false report. The evidence, far from agreeing, even contradicted and defeated itself. Jesus remained silent. The High Priest then rising up adjured him by the living God to tell them, if he were the Christ the Son  
of

of God. Out of respect to the sacred name of God, Jesus replied, *I am; and you shall hereafter see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* Had Caiphas been sincere in the important question he proposed, the light, that flashed from our Saviour's answer, might have opened his eyes to see the truth, or a salutary fear of judgment might have made him relent in his wicked purpose. / But on a heart full of rancour and hardened with guilt, the most striking truths make no impression. With all the rage of hypocritical zeal he rent his garments, and exclaimed, "What need of other evidence? You have heard the blasphemy from his own mouth. What is your opinion?" With one voice the whole Council answered, He is guilty of death.

The night being far advanced, the High-Priest went out of court, leaving Jesus unprotected and defenceless in the hands of an insolent rabble. There was scarce any kind of barbarous insult, which they did not inflict on the innocent Jesus during the

course of the night. They buffeted him, they tore off his ~~facred~~ hair, they spit upon him, they covered his all-seeing eyes, while others struck him on the face and bade him guess, who it was that struck him. But the deepest wound inflicted on our blessed Lord that night, was that, which he received from the fall of Peter his favoured Apostle. Of all the Apostles Peter had always been the first to profess his faith, and the most forward in expressing a readiness to die for his divine master. He had even made an attempt to defend him in the garden of Gethsemani, he had followed him from thence, tho' at a distance, into the court of the High-Priest. There mixing with the wicked crowd, he forgot his former purposes; there exposed to temptation and regardless of the previous admonition given him by Jesus the evening before, he faltered at the voice of a servant maid, and denied his having any knowledge of the man she spoke of. This public denial of his divine master he repeated no less than three times, and in the end

confirmed

confirmed it with an oath. Such was the fatal consequence of neglected prayer, and of too great a confidence in his own fancied strength ! His fall, very different from that of Judas, sprung from human weakness, not malice ; he therefore rose more quickly than he had fallen. The crowing of the cock immediately after his third denial, reminded him of Jesus's words : he went out, and wept bitterly.

Early in the morning, the Chief-Priests having held a consultation with the Elders and the Scribes, and all that were of the council against Jesus, and finding nothing proved against him in point of doctrine, resolved to carry him before the tribunal of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governour, as guilty of treason against the state. Bound therefore like a traitor, Jesus was led away from Caiphas's house, and delivered over to a heathen judge. The Chief-Priests and Elders with a vast multitude of people there appeared as his accusers. Jesus stood before the governour, and the Elders began to exhibit a long and slanderous charge



against him, as tho' he had been seducing the people from their duty of allegiance, by forbidding them to pay tribute to Cæsar, and stiling himself their king. ✕ Jesus was silent. ✕ Doeſt thou not hear the charges brought against thee, said Pilate to him? ✕

✕ The charges were notoriously false, and Jesus was still silent. Pilate wondered, and going into the hall of judgment called Jesus after him. Being desirous of clearing up the point, he asked him, if he was king of the Jews? Jesus answered, *I am; but my kingdom is not of this world.* Pilate then went out to the Jews, and declared aloud, that he could find no cause of condemnation in him. But they still insisted, that he had been trying to stir up the people to a revolt over all Judea, preaching sedition thro' the whole country, as he came along from Galilee to the very city of Jerusalem. At the mention of Galilee, which belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, Pilate thought he had a fair opportunity of freeing himself from a troublesome business; and upon inquiry finding Jesus to be of Galilee, he sent him  
away

away to Herod, who was also then in Jerusalem. Herod, who had long wished to see the person, of whom such wonders had been related, put many questions to him, while the Priests and Scribes stood loading him with accusations and imputed crimes. Jesus was wholly silent ; so that Herod considered him only as an object of contempt, clothed him with a white garment, and after having exposed him to the mockery of his guards, sent him back to Pilate.

Pilate upon this called together the Chief-Priests, the Magistrates, and people ; and began to plead before them in favour of the innocent Jesus. For he plainly saw, that Jewish envy was his only crime. "You have brought this man before me, said he; you have charged him with many crimes; but have proved nothing. I have examined, I have interrogated him in your presence, and have not found him guilty of one offence, nor has Herod. I will therefore release him conformably to the custom, which obliges me at this solemn festival to set some one prisoner free, as your choice

shall determine. There is in custody a notorious robber called Barabbas, who in a seditious riot has committed murder. Which of the two is it your will I should release?" "Not him, not him, but Barabbas," was the tumultuous cry. "What then shall I do with Jesus replied Pilate?" "Crucify, crucify him!" "What evil has he done? I find him guiltless." "It matters not; crucify him, they cried again, and release Barabbas." They grew more loud and clamorous in their demand; Pilate weakly yielded, and the murderer was released.

Pilate having gone thus far to satisfy the mob, tho' at the expense of justice and against his own conscience, proceeded to greater acts of cruelty and injustice. He had repeatedly declared aloud, that Jesus was wholly innocent of the crimes he had been unjustly charged with; yet as tho' he had really found him guilty, he sentenced him to a bloody and ignominious punishment, inflicted by Romans on none but reputed slaves. He ordered him to be scourged.

scourged. Jesus was therefore led into the Pretor's court, there stripped and tied to a pillar. The whole band of guards gathered round for his greater ignominy, and the barbarous sentence was executed on him with all the violence, that unfeeling cruelty is capable of exerting. After that the soldiers in derision treated him as a mocking; they wove a crown of sharp thorns and pressed it upon his head; they clothed him with a purple robe, and put into his hand a cane for a scepter. Then contemptuously bending the knee before him, they hailed him king of the Jews: after which they spit upon him, and taking the cane out of his hand, struck him on the head.

Thus humbled, thus disfigured and abased, Pilate resolved to show him to the people, hoping that the moving sight might induce them to desist from demanding his death. Jesus therefore went forth bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment, and Pilate said to them, *Behold the man!* Christians, rouse your faith; lift up the eyes of your soul, and with contrition of heart con-



template your suffering Jesus. Behold your Redeemer sorely stricken by the hand of divine justice. Behold the man of sorrows, loaded with your infirmities, scourged and bleeding for your offences! How changed, how fallen is his countenance! His beauty is disfigured, and all his comeliness effaced.\* From the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, his body is one continued wound. The hard-hearted Jews <sup>however</sup> were not moved: with loud clamours they still insisted upon his death. We have a law, they cried, and according to that law he ought to die, *because he has made himself the Son of God*. Shall I then crucify your king, said Pilate? We have no king but Cæsar, replied the Jews, and if thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend. Pilate was now agitated with double fear, the fear of spilling innocent blood, and the fear of losing Cæsar's favour. — Worldly interest prevailed, and he sentenced Jesus to be crucified. *Let us my brethren with*

Go forth, my soul, and bathed in tears  
of

\* Isaiah c. liii.

of sorrow and compassion accompany thy Redeemer to the mountain of Calvary. Spent with the sufferings he had already undergone, see him sinking beneath the burden of his cross, as he is led along. Respectfully approach, take it up, and follow thy Saviour to the mountain. Thou hast thy passions, thou also hast thy evil habits to crucify. Join in the lamentations of the pious women bewailing him in the way, and listen to the address he makes them. " Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep over yourselves and over your children. For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry ? " If your guiltless Saviour undergoes so much for sin, what must guilty sinners themselves undergo ?

<sup>our Saviour</sup> Jesus being come to the summit of Calvary entered upon the last most painful and ignominious stage of his bitter passion. He is stript of all his clothes, thrown down upon the ground, his sacred hands and feet violently stretched out, and nailed fast to the cross. The cross is then set upright,

and fixed in the ground between two other crosses, on which two thieves were executed at the same time. // Call forth, my Brethren, all the affections of your soul, approach in spirit and behold your divine Redeemer upon his cross, bleeding and agonising for sinful men! ~~X~~ Having dwelt with sorrow and compassion upon his visible sufferings, that meet your eyes, dive into the deep recesses of his sacred heart, and for your instruction consider over the virtues, that reign ~~therein~~ <sup>his heart</sup>; his humility, his meekness, his obedience, his resignation, his patience, his ardent love for man, and zeal for his Father's glory. The fervour of his zeal, and the great loss of blood, which had been drained out by such a variety of torments in the course of his passion, parched him with a burning heat. He cried out, *I thirst*. A sponge dipped in vinegar was instantly applied to his sacred mouth, not to ease, but to aggravate his pain.

The rage of his enemies was not lessened by his sufferings; they continued still to insult, to blaspheme and torment him. How sharp

sharp, how deep did these insults cut into his ~~facred~~ heart? That heart the most tender, the most benevolent, and most kind, that had been ever formed by the hand of omnipotence ! He knew the infinite sanctity of his own divine Person, he knew the boundless desire he had for man's salvation. On the other hand he beheld the height of ingratitude and malice, that resulted from the injuries he received ; the grief he felt on that account, was consequently most bitter. It drew this pathetic exclamation from him : *My God, my God, why hast thou abandoned me ?* Notwithstanding this bitter dereliction and comfortless distress, which he felt within him, he ceased not to comfort his condoling friends that were near. To the penitent thief, his fellow-sufferer on the cross, he says, *This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.* A consolatory sentence for all patient sufferers under whatever trial or affliction ! Near the cross of Jesus stood Mary his ~~virgin~~ mother, and with her John his beloved disciple. To her he says, *Woman, behold thy Son ;* and to him, *Behold thy*



*thy Mother.* Thus in the last moments of dying life did Jesus pay that tender regard, which was due to his disconsolate mother, and in the person of St. John he recommended his faithful followers to her maternal care and powerful protection. *For*

The great sacrifice of the cross was now nearly completed. But before he would complete it, Jesus for our example would publicly forgive, and even pray aloud, that his Father also would forgive his enemies. Within his own divine breast only were the motives of mercy and forgiveness to be found: for in his tormentors all was rancour and determined malice. From the garden of Gethsemani to Mount Calvary they had pursued him with unremitting virulence. Before all the public tribunals in Jerusalem they had loaded him with false accusations, slanderous reproaches, and ignominious outrages. To Jews and to Gentiles they had represented him as a blasphemer, as a seducer of the people, as a notorious malefactor, as a turbulent and seditious preacher. Nailed hands and  
feet

feet to a cross, crowned with a wreath of thorns, raised aloft as the most criminal between two thieves, tortured with pain in every sense and in every limb, insulted and blasphemed by the soldiers, by the chief-priests, by the scribes and elders of the people, overwhelmed with grief, and oppressed with sufferings, he cried out, *Father forgive them: they know not what they do.*

All was now accomplished. The scriptures were verified, and prophecy fulfilled. Nothing but the last gasp remained to finish the wonderful work of man's redemption. X Jesus Christ had now been three hours in exquisite torture upon the cross: thro' the numerous wounds he had received, his blood was all drained out, except what the cruel spear was to drain thro' the wound of his sacred side: X life was at its last ebb. X It was the ninth hour of the day. X The important moment fixt on from eternity for the author of life to die, was at hand. X From the sixth hour, when the scene of his crucifixion begun, the day had been overcast, and a mournful gloom had spread itself  
over

over all the land. ~~X~~The earth trembled; the sun grew dark; the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom; the rocks split asunder; the graves gave up their dead; ~~X~~all nature in fine, except the senseless Jews, seemed to sympathise with its agonising Lord. Spent and exhausted, with a loud voice he exclaimed, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,* and saying this he bowed his head and expired. .

DISCOURSE

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## DISCOURSE X.

UPON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

*The Lord hath truly risen. Luke c.xxiv.v.34.*

**W**HETHER we contemplate the doleful or the joyful mysteries of our Saviour's life, we shall find they equally concur to the instruction and consolation of mankind. By his passion and bitter death our blessed Lord instructs us, with what humility of heart, with what patience and resignation to the divine will, we are to receive and bear the sufferings incident to human life. By his resurrection from the dead he consoles and at once assures us of the glory we shall reap from our sufferings patiently endured. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is therefore one of those joyful mysteries, which confirms our faith and enlivens our hope in the pursuit of everlasting life.

Soon



Soon after our blessed Saviour had expired, his disciple Joseph of Arimathea, went to Pilate and asked him for the body : which being granted, he took it down from the cross the same evening, and conveyed it into a neighbouring garden. There after having wrapt it up with spices in a clean linen cloth, he laid it in his own new funeral monument, which he had cut in the rock. He then closed the mouth of the sepulchre with a heavy stone and departed.

Jesus had often mentioned before his death, that on the third day he should rise again. The Chief Priests and Pharisees well remembered it, and therefore applied to Pilate for a guard, as if they suspected a design in the disciples of stealing away the body, and then saying, that it was raised to life again. Pilate granted their request. They went, and for greater security sealed up the stone, and placed a guard of soldiers round, to prevent every one's coming near till after the third day. But in vain did their fury rage, in vain did envy and malice conspire against the Lord, and against his Christ?

He,

He, who dwells in the highest heavens, despised their empty schemes, and turned their malicious designs to their own confusion, even into the very means of manifesting the truth, which they strove to conceal.

For on the third day, early in the morning, the soul of our blessed Saviour, ~~which~~ during the time of its separation had been comforting the souls in Limbo, came to the sepulchre ~~and~~ reuniting itself with his sacred body, he rose by his own divine power from the dead. In that awful moment the earth shook in testimony of the great event, an Angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and rolling back the stone from the mouth of the monument, seated himself upon it. Struck with terror, the guards sunk away like dead men, till recovering themselves by degrees they went into the city and related to the Chief Priests what had happened. The Priests and Elders gave them a large sum of money to say nothing of the real fact, but to rumour it abroad that the disciples of Jesus came in  
the

the night and stole away the body, while they were asleep. But the glory of Christ's resurrection, which was soon to blaze out to the admiration of the whole world, was not to be stifled by any such human artifice. It was first proclaimed by the voice of Angels, and on the same day publicly evinced by the living voice of Jesus Christ himself.

About the dawn of day Mary Magdalene and some other devout women repaired to the sepulchre, carrying with them the perfumes they had been preparing to embalm the body of their Lord. They expected to have found him still among the dead. Their great concern, as they went along, was how they should remove the stone, that had been rolled against the mouth of the monument, when coming near they observed the stone was rolled back, and the entrance open. But not seeing the body, they entered the monument, and behold an Angel in the shape of a young man was sitting on the right side robed in white. Struck with surprise, they bowed down their heads and looked astonished; upon which the Angel spoke

spoke, and thus said to them, " Be not frightened. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified : he is not here : he is risen : he lives again. Why do you seek him amongst the dead ? Behold the place where they laid him. But go, tell Peter and the other disciples, that he is gone before them, as he promised, into Galilee, where they will see him."

Mary Magdalene in compliance with the Angel's injunction went straight to Peter and told him, that the body of Jesus was not to be found. Without waiting to hear any thing more, Peter and John immediately rose up and hastened to the monument. Mary followed them. When they arrived, Peter first and then John went into the monument. They found not the body ; they saw nothing but the linen cloths, in which the body had been wrapped. They wondered and departed. The confused state of their minds at that time was such, that they did not understand the Scriptures concerning Christ's resurrection. For altho' their blessed Lord had frequently mentioned  
his



his resurrection to them, altho' he had confirmed it by the sign of the prophet Jonas, and had expressly told them,\* that the Son of man should be delivered into the hands of sinful men to be derided, to be scourged and crucified, but that on the third day he would rise again, yet to them it still seemed an obscure mystery: and when reminded of these things by Mary Magdalene, and other devout women, they considered their story as an idle fancy, and did not believe them.† So incapable is man, when left to himself, of understanding the holy scriptures, and of forming a right judgment of the divine mysteries. But these doubts and this backwardness of belief in the Apostles were permitted by divine wisdom to quicken the belief of others, who in after ages were happily to believe and not see.†

Wherefore to remove all possible doubt concerning the reality of his resurrection, Jesus Christ began to shew himself alive to many of his chosen followers, on the very day he rose from the dead. As far

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\* Mat. c. xx.      † John c. xx.

as we can gather from the Evangelists, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, who remained weeping and looking for him at the door of the monument. Secondly to the holy women in their return from thence. Thirdly to St. Peter. Fourthly to two disciples on their way to Emmaus. Fifthly to ten of the Apostles assembled together in a room. He suddenly entered while the door remained shut, and standing in the midst of them he said, "Peace be with you. It is I, do not fear. Why are you troubled, and why do such thoughts arise within your breasts? For they were troubled and frightened, and imagined they saw a spirit. See my hands and feet, continued he, feel and see that it is I myself. For a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me have." He then showed them his hands and feet, with the wounds and print of the nails still remaining in them. And that no further doubt might remain upon their minds, he condescended to eat with them; he put them in mind of what he had said to them before his death upon the subject of his resurrection,

resurrection, and finally convinced them, that it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, conformably to the predictions, which the ancient Prophets and inspired Psalmist had uttered concerning him.

Of his glorious triumph over death and hell the Prophet Osee\* had thus spoken in his name: *O death, I will be thy death. O hell, I will be thy bite. Behold the lion of the tribe of the Judah has conquered, as it is written, † with a strong bite he has broken the iron bars of the gates of hell, and in his might he has trampled death to destruction. I will penetrate into the lower regions of the earth, says Ecclesiasticus, ‡ I will view all that sleep, and enlighten all that hope in the Lord.* How beautiful, how expressive, and sublime is this language of the inspired writer. It represents our great Redeemer in the midst of victory, surveying the wide regions of the dead, enlightening and calling into life all those, who hope in the Lord. To Him then be glory and empire for ever and ever.

Amen.

\* C. xiii.    † Rev. c. v.    ‡ c. xxiv.

Amen. He is living and was dead. He was slain and has redeemed us unto God by his blood. He is the first-begotten of the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth; behold he is alive for ever and ever, and he has the keys of death and of hell.\* O death, where is now thy victory? Death, where is thy sting?

The glittering show, which usually surrounds the great during life, vanishes at the approach of death. Stript of their worldly pageantry they sleep with corruption in the silent grave, and mingle with common dust. Jesus Christ, tho' he yielded to death, suffers no corruption, his sacred body tho' in the bosom of the earth turns not into dust, but the glory, that seemed to fly from him during his mortal course, blazes round him with unclouded brightness from the tomb. There he puts off all the marks of weak mortality, there he leaves his funeral bands, the trophies of his victory. The transient ignominy of his passion is absorpt in glory. Pain, sorrow, and affliction have lost their

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sting.

\* Rev. i.



sting. Death is disarmed, and no longer holds dominion over him. His sacred humanity, on which our griefs and infirmities once sat so heavy, is now raised to a life of transcendent glory, unchangeable and eternal. Eternal thanks to God, who has thus given us victory thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. || Jesus Christ therefore by his resurrection is our hope, our consolation, and our pattern.

1st. Jesus Christ is our hope. Blessed be God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, says St. Peter, ¶ who according to his great mercy hath regenerated us unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. For the same divine power, which resuscitated Jesus from the dead,\* will also with Jesus resuscitate us to a participation of that incorruptible, of that unfading and everlasting inheritance, which is reserved for us in heaven. Such, my Brethren, is the hope, which all true Christian believers possess in Christ Jesus our Lord. In this hope the Arian has no share; because by denying the divinity of  
Jesus

Jesus Christ, he rejects the foundation, on which this hope is built. To this hope the Unitarian renounces his title; because by disbelieving a plurality of Persons in the unity of the divine nature, he overturns in his own mind the whole Christian system, annihilates the work of man's redemption, discards the incarnation, the death and resurrection of the Son of God. Vain then in his opinion must be the preaching of the Gospel, and groundless the hope of any future recompence. To this hope the Materialist has no pretensions, when putting himself upon a level with the brute creation he degrades the dignity of an immortal soul, and meanly fancies it doomed to perish with his body in the same grave. To this hope in fine the Deist lays no claim, when doubting of all, that reason cannot fathom, he affects to reduce the standard of religion to the airy conceits of his own understanding. Void of the principles of faith he forms no other idea of divine things, than what imperfect reason under the influence of flesh and blood suggests. For the sensual man,

says St. Paul, \* has no conception of the things, that are of the spirit of God; he neither relishes nor understands them. Full of that earthly wisdom, which is foolishness in the sight of God, he disregards the truths of revelation; too proud to stoop to the simplicity of the Gospel, too self-sufficient to submit his judgment to the principles of faith, and too skilled in false philosophy to adopt the precepts or the practice of religion, he shines for a time in the delusive sphere of infidelity, till like a baleful meteor he vanishes out of sight never to shine again.

2dly. Jesus is our consolation. Sufferings in some shape or other are inseparable from the life of man. Man born of a woman, says holy Job, † lives but a short time, and is filled with many miseries. Those miseries are often heavy and weigh him to the very ground. Groaning beneath the weight, it is natural for him to look out for something to console and support weak nature. He finds it in the resurrection of Jesus

\* 1 Cor. c. ii.

† c. xiv.

Jesus Christ, who first suffered, before he could enter into his glory. His sufferings were short, his glory is everlasting. Since the ~~prevarication~~ <sup>fall</sup> of our first parents, sufferings are become our portion in this vale of tears. They are the just punishment of sin committed against a God of infinite perfection. But such is the goodness of God even in his chastisements, that he leaves the sinner free to merit by his sufferings, so as to make them the subject of his future glory. Under this ~~sweet~~ conviction the faithful believer not only patiently, but joyfully submits to whatever sufferings kind Providence is pleased to let fall upon him. *I know my Redeemer lives*, said Job in the depth of his affliction, † *In the last day I shall rise from the earth, I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God. This is my hope laid up within my bosom.* The same hope, my Brethren, since our Redeemer is really risen from the dead, shines forth on us with brighter rays of comfort, than it possibly could in those darker ages



of remote antiquity. For what Job believed would happen at some distant period, we know by the testimony of holy writ has actually come to pass. Now if the belief of his Redeemer's future resurrection from the dead could ground in that afflicted man so strong a hope of one day sharing in the same glory, how much more powerfully ought the same consolatory thought to act upon the Christian's mind, who beholds in Jesus Christ the promise of a glorious resurrection truly verified? Who by experience as well as by faith is convinced, how quickly his tribulations end, and to what lasting joys they pave the way?

The ways of God with respect to his chosen followers frequently appear mysterious to human eyes: they are always wonderful. Persecution, oppression, tribulation, and suffering, is oftentimes the portion he allots them in his providence. For whom he hath foreknown to be of his elect, as his Apostle teaches,\* those he hath also decreed to be made conformable to the image of his

\* Rom. viii.

his Son. And what is the image we discover in his Son, but the image of humiliation, of tribulation, and sufferings, which he has traced out to us from his birth in Bethlehem to his death on Mount Calvary? The picture indeed at first sight seems discouraging and gloomy. But upon a more close examination the colouring will be seen to glow, and to open to us a wide-extended prospect the most cheering and inviting. From the dusky shade of transient afflictions the bright succession of unbounded joys breaks out, and comforts us with the promise, that our short successful struggles for victory shall be rewarded with an everlasting triumph, and that our light and momentary tribulations upon earth shall be crowned with an immensurable weight of glory in heaven. Upon this consideration our blessed Saviour never mentioned the ignominy of his sufferings and death to his Apostles, without assuring them at the same time of his resurrection, that would quickly ensue. The Son of man, said he,† will be

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betrayed

† Mat. xx.

betrayed and delivered up into the hands of the chief Priests, of the Scribes, and Gentiles: he will be insulted, he will be scourged, he will be condemned and crucified: but on the third day he will rise again. Jesus on this ground is therefore stiled the first begotten of the dead,\* the first fruits of those, who have slept. † For as by the sin of Adam we had all incurred the guilt of death, so by the power of Jesus Christ we receive life and resurrection from the dead. In the last day the Archangel by sound of trumpet will command the dead to rise, and in the twinkling of an eye all shall be raised in Christ to life again. They, who shall have been animated with his spirit, and shall have borne their share of sufferings with him, shall then also rise to a participation of the same glory, to an everlasting inheritance of bliss, in the same heavenly kingdom. This, my Brethren, is a pleasing hope, an animating and cheering comfort in affliction.

X 3dly. Jesus is our pattern. The resurrection

\* Rev. i.

† 1 Cor. xv.

rection of Jesus Christ from the dead not only enlivens our hope and consoles our griefs, it likewise instructs and directs our practice in the way of virtue. Christ indeed died for the destruction of sin, but he is risen for our justification. ~~If~~ like living branches grafted on the stock of Christ, we are planted with him after the similitude of his death, as the Apostle speaketh, ¶ in like manner shall we be of his resurrection. To divest ourselves of the habit of sin, to shut our eyes to the allurements of sin, and to die to the guilt of sin, is the pattern for repentance, shown us from the cross. To rise from sin to a state of grace, from tepidity to fervour in devotion, from a neglect to the practice of Christian duties, is the pattern for a new life, presented to us in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. For as Christ rose by the glory of the Father, says the same Apostle,\* so should we also rise after having died to sin, and ~~begin a new life~~. Having died once, he dies no more: being now restored to life

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¶ Rom. c. vi.

\* Ibid.



he lives eternally to God. So do you, my Brethren, look upon yourselves as dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Be careful to plant the tender shoots of virtue in your souls, and to nourish skilfully their growth, that you may in due season gather their desirable fruit. Being made free from sin by the crucifixion of your former vices and evil inclinations, the fruit you are to reap is sanctification, and the end you are to expect is life everlasting.

Christ rose from the grave not only exempt from all the painful sensations, that are incident to mortal man, but indued moreover with the distinctive qualities of a glorified body. These are *clarity*, *subtily*, *agility*, and *impassibility*. Impassibility is a quality, which exempts the body from corruption, renders it incapable of suffering, and invulnerable by death. Of this quality St. Paul declares the body of our Lord to be possessed, when he tells us,† that death no longer has any power over him. Death and the appendages of death hurt him now  
no

† Rom. c. vi. v. 9.

no more ; he is at once invulnerable, incorruptible, and immortal. Agility is a quality, which enables the body to move instantaneously from one place to another, even the most distant, without labour or fatigue. By virtue of this quality our blessed Saviour appeared at different times to his disciples, and as suddenly vanished from their sight. ‡ Subtilty is a quality, by which the body penetrates like a spirit, and passes through the most solid substances. Thus while the doors were shut, our blessed Lord unexpectedly entered the room of the Apostles, and suddenly stood in the midst of them.\* Clarity or brightness is a quality, which diffuses a bright splendour over the whole body, and vests it with light as shining as the sun. Such was the glory, with which our blessed Saviour shone in his transfiguration on Mount Thabor. ||

To the pure and immaculate body of Jesus Christ these glorious qualities were undoubtedly due. But to the bodies of the elect they are acquired through him, and

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granted

‡ Luke c. xxiv. \* John c. xx. || Mat. c. xvii.

granted by a special favour of the divine bounty. I am the resurrection and the life, says he. † Hence this animal body of ours, as St. Paul calls it, § will at the last day rise a spiritual body. From being corruptible it will put on incorruption, and from being mortal it will put on immortality. Such, my Brethren, is the life, and such the glory, to which our gracious Redeemer raises all those, who seriously endeavour to express these spiritual qualities of a glorified body in the conduct of their lives. This is still the pattern we are to keep constantly in view.

1st. Clarity is the first endowment of a glorified body, and it is manifested in a moral sense by the good example we give to those about us. Integrity of faith, purity of manners, a punctuality in all moral and religious duties constitute its glory. This is the light, which our blessed Saviour commands us so to let shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father, who is in heaven.\* By this the  
finer

† John c. xi.

§ 1 Cor. c. xv.

\* Mat: c. v.

sinner is ~~freely~~ drawn from his evil courses, his darkness is dispelled, his mind is opened to the eternal truths, his hope is enlivened, and finally his faith is animated into action.

2dly. Subtilty is the second endowment of a glorified body, and in a moral line it is expressed by a firm and steady fortitude of mind, which carries us thro' every difficulty, that lies before us in our way to heaven. We have our domestic and external enemies to conquer, before we can be entitled to the crown. The enterprise is great, and great obstacles in appearance will undoubtedly occur. That powerful enemies can be subdued without combat, that the kingdom of heaven can be gained without labour, that the narrow gate can be entered without struggle, that the commandments can be kept without exertion, that the duties of religion can be always fulfilled without some temporal inconvenience, is not to be expected. If any one is willing to come after me, says Jesus Christ, ¶ he must deny himself,



himself, he must take up his cross and then follow me. Brethren, be not discouraged. Upon trial you will find, that neither the difficulty is so great, nor the cross so heavy, as sickly fancy and faint-hearted sloth would make it. The high rugged mountain, which at a distance seems insurmountable to the desponding traveller, is found upon a nearer view to present a gradual and easy ascent. In your progress towards heaven have but a good will, and in Jesus Christ, who strengthens you by his holy grace, you will have the power to do whatever is commanded you. For to him, who does his best, God never refuses grace.

3dly. Agility is the third endowment of a glorified body. In a soul spiritually risen to God by sincere repentance, this quality is manifested by her active zeal for the divine service. Being quickened by the infusion of the holy Spirit, such a soul moves with fervour and alacrity from one duty to another, within the sphere of her Christian vocation. Never weary in the habit of doing good, she either feels not the labour,  
that

that accompanies the divine service, or is delighted with it. With cheerfulness, O Lord, have I run the way of thy commandments, when thou hast dilated my heart.\*

4thly. Impassibility is the fourth prerogative of a glorified body. With this quality the soul is spiritually endowed, when fixt in the purpose of a virtuous life she preserves herself inviolate from the contagion of mortal sin. Conscious of the rich treasure she carries in her bosom, she cautiously avoids the occasions, the company, the place, the entertainments and connexions, that might expose her to the danger of being plundered of it. Placed as she is amidst a variety of pleasing objects, she cannot help feeling the impression they make upon her corporal senses. The sensation may flatter or provoke some lurking passion and tempt frail nature to rebel. To be thus tempted is indeed a misery, not to yield will be her glory. Knowing, that without her own consent no temptation can ever hurt her, she prudently sets a guard upon

upon her thoughts, restrains the lively fallies of imagination, and diligently watches the avenues of her heart, lest they should let in the enemy, and betray her to destruction. Such, my Brethren, is the caution, such the wisdom of a Christian, who seriously intends to save his soul. By these means he rises from his former habits of sin to a permanent state of grace, the essential requisite of that final resurrection to glory, which he expects thro' Christ his Saviour, in the last day.

Most gracious Lord, since thou hast been pleased to enliven us with this hope, and to instruct us by thy own example, mercifully grant, that by thee, and with thee, we may rise triumphant over all our enemies, and in the end be found worthy to receive the crown, which thou hast purchased us by thy blood. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE

## DISCOURSE XI.

UPON THE ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

*The Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God. Mark c. xvi. v. 19.*

OUR blessed Redeemer was pleased to remain forty days upon earth after his resurrection from the dead. The reality of his resurrection was a truth of such important consequence to all his followers, that in his wisdom he judged it necessary to establish it by such proofs, as no rational man could call in question. He frequently appeared to them, sometimes to a few, sometimes to many of them together, and then withdrawing from their presence, he weaned them by degrees from the fond attachment they had to his humanity. He conversed and eat with them, he showed them his wounds still remaining in his hands, feet, and side, he put them in mind of the discourses



courses he had held with them before his crucifixion, and finally instructed them in many things requisite for them to know concerning the kingdom of God, which is his Church.

No doubt of the identity of his Person now remaining with his disciples, on the fortieth day he led them forth to a high mountain not far distant from Jerusalem, called the Mountain of Olives. There being upon the point of leaving this lower world, he lifted up his hands and blessed them : \* and as he was blessing them, he raised himself gradually from the ground, and mounted in awful majesty thro' the air towards heaven, they earnestly looking up and adoring, till an intervening cloud received him from their sight. They remaining still fixed in the same place, behold two Angels appeared in white apparel, and said to them, † “ Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven ? This same Jesus, who is ascended to heaven, will hereafter come in the

\* Luke c. xxiv.

† Acts c. i.

the manner you have seen, to judge the living and the dead."

Jesus ascended not alone. Besides an innumerable train of the heavenly host; he led with him all those happy souls he had redeemed from Limbo, the immortal trophies of his victory. Of this St. Paul in the words of the Psalmist ¶ thus speaks to the Ephesians, † Christ ascending on high, led captivity captive. He hath distributed his gifts to men. Those holy captives had long languished in a state of painful separation from their God, whom they ardently loved, and as ardently longed to see in his kingdom of glory. The day of their delivery at length came. Jesus in his triumph over sin broke their chains asunder, burst open the brazen gates and the iron bars, that confined them, delivered them from their captivity, and brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death.\* Sing then to God, ye kingdoms of the earth; sing ye to the Lord; sing ye to God, who mounteth above the heaven of heavens to the

¶ Psalm lxiv.

† C. iv.

\* Psalm cvi.

the east. God has ascended with jubily, the Lord has ascended with the sound of trumpet. For he, who has ascended above all the heavens,† is the very same, who had first descended into this lower world, the only begotten and eternal Son of God in the assumed form of man. He descended to seek and to save that, which was lost,‖ and he has ascended to take possession of that unspeakable glory, which he has acquired by his blood both for himself and us.

Lift up your gates, O ye Princes, exclaims the royal Prophet,§ in a stile truly noble and sublime, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in. The Prophet speaks in the name of those ministering spirits, who attended their triumphant Lord in his ascension, and immediately answers in the name of those celestial Guardians, who watched at the gates of heaven, saying: Who is this King of glory? He is the Lord, who is strong and mighty, his attendants reply, the Lord, mighty in battle. Wherefore lift up your  
gates

† Ep. iv.

‖ Luke xix.

§ Psalm xxiii.

gates, ye Princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in. The heavenly Princes, cautious as it were how and to whom they opened the gates, which had been shut since Adam's sin against all his race, again ask, who is this King of glory? The others then answer, that he is the Lord of powers, the strong and mighty not in battle only, but in power itself. The Lord of powers he is the King of glory.

Jesus Christ therefore in his sacred humanity according to the scriptures is now raised above all principality and power and virtues, and dominations,\* above the highest order of Cherubims and Seraphims, above every name, that is named not only in this world, but in the world to come. Being the splendour of his Father's glory, and the figure of his substance,† he sitteth on the right hand of majesty on high, as far above the Angels, as the name he has inherited is exalted above theirs. For to whom of the Angels has the Father at any time

\* Eph. i.      † Heb. i.



time said, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.?" But to the Son he says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. A scepter of equity is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity. Therefore God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. Sit on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool."

The application of these passages from the royal Prophet thus made, as we see, by an inspired Apostle, leaves no room even for the smallest doubt upon the important truth they convey. They convey the truth of two distinct natures really existing in Jesus Christ: the one divine and eternal, the other human and temporal; the one consubstantial with the Father, the other exalted in glory to the right hand of the Father. When we therefore write or speak of Jesus Christ, it must always be remembered, that we write or speak of him, who is at the same time both God and man, and consequently that the properties of both na-

tures

tures are in the truest sense applicable to him; because he unites them all in the self-same Person. For by becoming man, he underwent no change in his divine nature, which is always perfect and immutable, but he assumed and united human nature to the divine. Under these two different relations he is at the same time equal to and less than the Father. By his divinity he is equal to the Father, because having with him the same one divine essence, he is also with him the same one God. *I and the Father,\** says he, *are one.* By his humanity he is less than the Father, because having taken to himself a human body and human soul, he is in all things except sin, become man, like one of us. Of himself, therefore in this respect, he says, *The Father is greater than I.†*

But when Jesus Christ is said to sit at the right hand of the Father in heaven, it is not to be understood, that he is confined to that one posture of his body, or that the Father has any hands or any human shape. For  
God

\* John c. x.

† John c. xiv.

God is a pure, incorporeal, and all-perfect Spirit. The image of God, as he is in himself, comes not within the reach of our mortal senses. When the scripture therefore speaks of God, it uses such an imagery of language, as is adapted to our senses, that it may thereby convey to us some imperfect knowledge of those sublime mysteries, which are ineffable in themselves, and incomprehensible to our weak understanding. When we are informed by faith, that Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, we are given to understand, that the sacred humanity of our Lord is raised to that height of glory, and to that supreme beatitude, than which there is nothing higher and nothing greater in the whole bliss of heaven: that he moreover holds the same sovereign dominion with the Father over all creatures; because as God he is equal to the Father in power, in wisdom, and in all perfection.

Christ is risen from the dead, and exalted to glory, says St. Peter, ¶ that our faith and

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our hope may solely be in God. His resurrection from the dead to a state of immortality, and his ascension from earth to heaven, ground in us a firm belief and a lively hope, that after the sufferings of this life we shall also rise and be happy with him in everlasting glory. Between his resurrection and ascension Christ would spend no more than forty days on earth, by which he plainly indicates, that we are not to settle our hearts on earthly objects, which we soon must leave, that no true happiness is to be found on earth, that heaven alone is the seat of bliss, and designed for our permanent abode.

Happiness to be true must be lasting and capable of satisfying an immortal soul. Such a happiness this world has not to give. Nothing is permanent under the sun. The world itself is perpetually passing with all, that is desirable in it. Always ready to flatter and foment the passions of men, the world appears generally fair in its promises, but often proves deceitful in the end, often promising what it cannot give, and only



giving what is of short duration. The goods it offers contain not the worth they show; they afford some short amusement to the senses, no true contentment to the mind. Deluded mortals spend themselves in running after the gilded toy, which at once excites and mocks their toilsome pursuit. Happiness they fancy is the object they pursue: that object they never overtake. In this earthly vale of tears, where floods of grief and joy swell high and flow by turns, true happiness does not dwell; and tho' it did, yet man himself could not enjoy it long. Man lives but a short time, and dies. He springs up like a flower of the field, which remains awhile unnoticed perhaps or neglected, till it fades away and is trodden under foot. Being ever upon the change in his fear and wishes from one thing to another, man enjoys but little, and that little he enjoys not long, before he passes out of life like a shadow, and is seen no more. This my Brethren, has been the lot of all, who have lived before us. We must follow soon. The rich, the gay,

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the great, whom the world once stiled happy, sleep undistinguished under ground. Their worldly grandeur and all their fancied happiness vanished in a moment like a dream: or if a sepulchral inscription chance to preserve for a while their distinguished dust from oblivion among the living, the earthly monument can contribute nothing to their happiness among the dead.

Riches, honours, and carnal pleasures, are the baits, by which the world decoys the greatest part of mankind into its service. By these it captivates, it flatters, it dazzles the eyes of thousands, but makes none happy. The soul is too exalted in her views to be contented with earthly goods, however precious they may seem. Designed by her bounteous Creator to be eternally happy in a future state, she naturally aspires to that, which can make her so, when all these earthly objects shall exist no more. Of all the things, that are thought great or precious in this vain world, she discovers none in dignity or worth equal to herself,

herself, consequently none, that can equal her pretensions to purer joys, or satiate her longing after more lasting happiness. Being ever upon the search after something more, she is ever restless, until she rests in the center of all good, which is God alone. Immortal in her nature she meets with nothing under heaven either good enough or great enough to fill the heart and satisfy the mind. "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God, said our blessed Lord.\* There, my Brethren, is our place of rest: that is the point we always ought to keep in view: thither all our thoughts and all our actions ought to tend; for there only we are to expect the full completion of our holy desires.

But the sensual man seldom thinks of lifting up his heart to heaven; for his affections are not there. Lulled by deceitful pleasure into an uneasy slumber, he dreams away life with little or no concern for eternity. Attached by habit to those objects only, which are pleasing to flesh and blood,

\* John xx.

blood, he forms but a slender notion of heavenly things, and has but little relish for the duties of a Christian. There lies his misery. He is a stranger to those internal sweets, to that peaceful calm of conscience, which the virtuous only know. He feels within his soul the corroding want of some absent good, which no indulgence of his senses can ever satisfy. Disappointment or disgust disquiets his mind, nor will conscience suffer him to be at rest as long as he repents not of the sinful habits, to which he has so strongly and so criminally been attached. Of this truth the scripture furnishes an undeniable proof in the parable of the prodigal son, mentioned by St. Luke. ‡ Impatient of restraint, and weary of the good order established in his father's house, the rash youth had no sooner got possession of his fortune, than he rushed out into the wide world to engage in its ruinous vices, follies, and extravagance. He had proposed to himself much happiness. Passion blinded and deceived him. The criminal



excesses of a luxurious life soon reduced him to distress and misery. His misery was at once the punishment and conviction of his folly. So incapable are sensual delights of giving what they promise, true happiness!

Riches, tho' so eagerly sought, are equally fallacious. Riches are undoubtedly a human blessing, and when duly administered productive of great good, tho' still incapable of making man truly happy. Solomon, the wisest as well as the richest man on earth, witnesses the truth of this assertion. That great king, while his heart was right, had been the favourite of the most High, he abounded with heaps of wealth, he flowed in delights the most exquisite, that riches could procure, and he denied himself no enjoyment, that luxury could invent or his heart could covet. But in the midst of all this what did he experience, and what were his sentiments? "Vanity of vanities, says he,\* and all is vanity." Far from being happy, he found himself entangled in many sorrows. For behold all is vanity and affliction

\* Eccl. i.

flition of mind. To an unrestrained appetite riches furnish the means of every criminal indulgence, and without great caution lead the possessors of them to destruction. "Go, ye rich, says St. James,† and howl in your miseries, that are coming upon you. Your gold and your silver is rusted; and their rust shall bear testimony against you. You have heaped up for yourselves a treasure of wrath for the last days. You have feasted upon the earth, and nourished your heart in luxuries. No true, no lasting happiness is there.

Power, titles, and worldly honours, the glittering objects of ambition, are equally incapable of contenting the mind of man. The crown even of kings, which shines so bright to the beholder's eye, sits often heavy upon the head, that bears it. Care, solicitude, and restless desire is the usual portion of those who are thought happy, and therefore envied by a mistaken world. Some disappointment, or the fear of a disappointment damps the enjoyment of the present

hour, while ambition goads them on in the pursuit of some distant object, which they are anxious, but not likely to attain. The proud king of Babylon said in his heart, † I will mount into heaven, above the stars of God I will exalt my throne, I will sit upon the mountain of the covenant on the side of the north, I will raise myself above the height of the clouds, and be like the Most High. Vain, O Lucifer, and impious is thy boast. Thou shalt be pulled down from thy towering greatness, thou shalt sink into the grave, into the very depth of the pit, says the Lord of Hosts. Thy pride shall be lowered unto hell, thy scepter shall be broken, the very name of Babylon shall be blotted out: under thee the moth shall be strewed, and worms shall be thy covering. Such is the downfall of all earthly happiness, which has not virtue and religion for its support.

Aman,\* the haughty and potent minister of Assuerus, had been raised by royal favour to the highest dignities that a Persian monarch

† Isaiah c. xiv

\* Esther c. v.

monarch could lavish on a subject. But because a poor Jew refused to rise and bow to him, as he went in and out of the palace, he found no satisfactory enjoyment in them. Rage and resentment filled his heart. He considered all his great preferments as nothing, while he beheld Mardochai sitting at the king's gate. So little fitted are the highest honours to give happiness to man, when the most trifling circumstance is capable of ruffling the mind, and imbittering his thoughts! Ye sons of men, cries the Psalmist, § how long shall the love of this vain world have the ascendancy in your affections? To what purpose do you waste your time, your rest, and peace of mind, in quest of what you know will deceive and cheat you in the end? How long will you toil with heavy heart after fleeting vanity? Why do you turn from the pure chrystal spring of rational devotion, and impotently strive to slake your thirst in the intoxicating streams of giddy dissipation? Seek then a happiness, such as this vain world can nei-

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ther

§ Psalm iv.



ther give nor take away. Seek the happiness, which a God of infinite goodness has prepared for you in heaven; a happiness complete in the fullest measure of pure delights, immense, eternal.

The kingdom of heaven is compared by our blessed Saviour to a precious treasure.† For it is a treasure of most perfect bliss glowing in the bosom of the Divinity. It is a rich collection of every joy, and of every pure delight, that the soul can possibly desire. This is the seat of happiness, the place of everlasting rest, which our blessed Lord assured his disciples he was going to prepare for them.\* Wherefore lift up your thoughts, my Brethren, to those happy mansions, contemplate the glory that awaits you there, quicken your hope, and be not sluggish in your endeavour to obtain it. If you are spiritually risen with Christ, you will consequently seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God. You will therefore mind the things, that are above, as the Apostle admonishes,¶  
and

† Mat. c. xiii. \* John c. xiv. ¶ Col. c. iii.

and not the things, that are upon the earth.  
For your life is hidden with Christ in God.

To a Christian, who has leisurely considered the duration and extent of the joys of heaven, all earthly goods will appear as insignificant, as a few grains of sand compared with the richest gems. They will consequently engross no more of his attention, than the duties of his station in life require, and will by him be no otherwise employed or sought after, than is subservient and conducive to his last end. To that end he wisely will direct his thoughts, words, and deeds, knowing that God is a just and faithful rewarder of all good. Where his Redeemer is, there he also hopes to be. There is his treasure, there his heart is fixed, there his desires and best affections meet.

To draw our attention as well as to animate our zeal in the pursuit of this last end, Jesus Christ assures us, § that in his heavenly Father's house there are many mansions; so that each one shall have a place

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suited

§ John c. xiv.

suited to his deserts, and each one shall  
 enjoy and see God in a degree more or less  
 extensive, according to the greater or less  
 diligence he employed on earth in God's  
 service. In heaven therefore each one shall  
 rank not according to the partial distinc-  
 tion of worldly titles, but according to the  
 degree of holiness he has acquired in the  
 sight of God. Under this persuasion the  
 Saints have all stretched forward with a holy  
 emulation in the course of virtue, that they  
 might not only secure, but increase the  
 crown they hoped for. In the same pro-  
 portion as they measured out their services  
 to God, to them has God measured out his  
 glory in return. Crowned with glory they  
 shine in their respective degree of merit  
 with the light of God himself, and they shall  
 continue so to shine like stars for all eter-  
 nity. Short indeed were their labours, but  
 everlasting is their reward. Now as one  
 star differs in brightness from another star,  
 so shall the blessed in heaven differ one from  
 another in their brightness of glory, each  
 one shining with a lustre peculiar to him-  
 self;

self; because to each one it will be given according to his works.\* To all and every individual the Majesty of God will be revealed in full splendour. They all shall see him, but some more clearly than others, face to face. From this clear sight and knowledge of God's inexhaustible perfections, such a torrent of delights will for ever flow and fill their souls, as no mortal tongue can express and no heart conceive. Hence their joy will be every way complete; their happiness will be always full without measure and without end.

In this mortal state the happiness of man is always imperfect, because it is measured out to him by parcels, by a necessary succession of moments in broken intervals of enjoyment, and is therefore never equal to the insatiable desires of his heart. But in heaven the glory of the blessed is poured out in one perpetual overflow of delights, which admits no division of time, no interruption of enjoyment, no diminution of bliss. God by nature is one supreme, immense, eternal,

\* Mat. c. xvi. v. 27.



eternal, and indivisible perfection, in which all happiness, all beauty, all wisdom, all goodness, all sanctity, and power essentially center. To this center of unbounded happiness our souls naturally tend, thither by the impulse of divine grace they incessantly aspire, there the moment they enter heaven, they eternally repose. There they possess God wholly and entirely, and in possessing God they at once possess an eternal, an immense, and indivisible weight of unspeakable glory. For as the perfections of God can undergo no change or division, and as the immensity of God has no bounds, and the eternity of God no end, the blessed in heaven by possessing God, consequently possess a good, that is immense, immutable, and eternal.

The measure of their happiness, as far as their limited nature will allow, is no other than the immensity of God, and the duration of their happiness is no less than the eternity of God : therefore in each moment they enjoy a whole eternity of bliss. Hence their bliss will be always full, because it will always

always satiate the soul: their bliss will be always fresh, because it will never cloy: their bliss in fine will be always present, because it will be never interrupted. No pain, no grief, no solicitude, no fear, nor any other evil whatever shall approach those happy mansions, where nothing but the sound of gladness is ever heard, and nothing but what delights will be ever seen. To God and to the Lamb, who was slain for our redemption and is now alive, joyful canticles of praise shall for ever charm the ear, while the light of God himself shall be a perpetual source of fresh joy, and of fresh transport to the soul. How will the soul then bless the God, who made her, the God, who redeemed her, the God, who sanctified and fitted her for such happiness? With what ecstasies of holy joy, and with what flames of seraphic love she will then glow, we better can imagine than express.

Such, my Brethren, is the prospect we have before us. Such is the glory, such the crown, which a God of infinite perfection has prepared for us. To give us a title

title to it Jesus Christ has laid down his life: to animate our hope he has already taken possession of it. But to make that title efficacious we must co-operate with his grace, and give something of our own. What must we give? My son, says Almighty God,\* give me thy heart. It is no great thing; yet he asks no more. It is too small to be divided: he demands the whole. Let us then serve and love God with our whole heart, and heaven is our own. Were the effusion of our blood or the sacrifice of life required, weak nature might be shocked; or if great and heroic deeds were necessary to gain heaven, most men might excuse themselves upon the plea of having neither the opportunity nor abilities for such exertion. Such exertion in the common course of things is exacted from no man. But every man has it in his power to sanctify his soul and to gain heaven by the assistance of divine grace, which to the sincere Christian is never wanting. By the sweet disposition of divine Providence sanctity is annexed to the daily duties of a Christian life.

\* Prov. c. xxiii.

life. Of this a sound and solid faith is the foundation ; of this a general good intention and a moral diligence to fulfil the duties of our respective state is the consummation.

But if in the execution of this glorious work we have any contradiction, any extraordinary labour or difficulty to undergo, what an encouragement, and what a comfort will it be to know, that every step we take in God's service, that every pain we feel, that every sigh we draw, that every effort we make upon a proper motive, is noticed by an all-seeing God, and recorded in the book of life to our account? What shall then deter us from the service, and separate us from the love of Jesus Christ? Shall temptation, shall the world, shall tribulation, shall adversity or suffering from the world? No, my Brethren; nothing shall effect so fatal a separation. There is nothing in the world, that can be set in balance with the future glory, which we hope thro' the merits of Jesus Christ our Redeemer will be one day revealed in us.

DISCOURSE



## DISCOURSE XII.

UPON THE HOLY GHOST THE COMFORTER.

*The Holy Ghost the Comforter will teach you all things. John c. xiv. v. 26.*

**T**O complete the work of man's redemption it is necessary that the sanctifying grace of God's holy Spirit be likewise added to the merits of our divine Redeemer. For unless a man be born anew by water and the Holy Ghost,\* he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. I tell you the truth, says our blessed Saviour to his disciples, ¶ it is expedient for you that I go, for if I go not, the Comforter will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you, that he may remain with you for ever.† He is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, and when he comes, he shall bear testimony concerning me. For

\* John c. iii.

¶ C. xvi.

† C. xiv.

he will teach you all truth, and will enlighten your minds, so as to make you see and understand the sublime truths I have already taught you.

From this clear testimony of holy writ it is evinced, and it is what the Catholic Church from the beginning has uniformly believed and taught, that the Holy Ghost is the third Person of the most blessed Trinity, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is with them both equally adored and glorified. For to him is communicated wholly and substantially the same divine nature, which eternally subsists in the Father and the Son, and therefore with them he is the same supreme individual God, eternal and infinite in all perfection. For as the knowledge so likewise is the love, which God has of himself, immutable and immense without beginning and without end. This the increated and self-existing Spirit of God, who in his unbounded search comprises all things, even the unfathomable depths of the divine essence, as St. Paul assures us.\*

\* 1 Cor. c. ii.

This

This is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, according to Isaiah, † the Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and piety. His absolute perfections are identically the same as those of the other two divine persons. For all things, whatsoever the Father hath, are mine, says our blessed Lord. ¶ I and the Father are one; § and the Three, who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, are one. † This then is the divine Spirit, by the breath of whose mouth, as the Psalmist speaks, || the heavens were first ranged in that beauteous order, in which they still shine and move. He therefore is the Almighty Lord and sovereign creator of all things. He is the vivifying Spirit, as Ezechiel witnesses, †† that directs and animates the ministering Cherubims in their attendance upon the Almighty. He is the Spirit, that has spoken by the Prophets, that has inspired the sacred writers, that remains for ever with the Catholic and Apostolic

† C. i.    ¶ John c. xvi.    § c. x.    † John c. v.  
 || Psalm xxxii.    †† C. i.

Apostolic Church,\* to preserve and teach her all truth ¶ thro' every age, to the end of the world. In the latter days, saith the Lord, § I will pour forth my Spirit upon all flesh, upon my servants and my handmaids, and they shall prophesy, and proclaim over all the earth the wonderful works of God.

The infused gift of tongues, the gift of foretelling things to come, the gift of working prodigies and wonders is a privilege, which the Holy Ghost has at times imparted to a chosen few of true believers, for the greater glory of God and the special benefit of those, who witness and behold them. But these external operations of the divine Spirit have no necessary connexion with the infusion of those interior graces, which give spiritual life and sanctity to the soul. To cleanse our souls from sin, to enlighten our minds, to warm the will with devout affections, and to invigorate our endeavours in the pursuit of virtue, is the invariable effect of sanctifying grace, and a  
pure

\* John c. xiv.

¶ c. xvi.

§ Acts c. ii.



pure gift of the Holy Ghost, denied to none, who do their best to deserve it.

To make us sensible of these spiritual effects, which the Holy Ghost works in the souls of the faithful, he is in various parts of the sacred writings marked out to us under the outward figures of water, of a dove, of wind and fire. Soft as a gentle shower he sweetly infuses himself into the souls of the faithful, or like a living fountain pours his cleansing streams of grace thro' the channel of the holy sacraments to wash them from the stain of sin. I will pour out clean water upon you, says the Almighty,\* and you shall be cleansed from all your filth, and I will put my Spirit in the midst of you. By his secret inspirations he draws the repenting sinner from his wonted haunts of noise and dissipation, and teaches him to moan like the dove, in domestic retirement for his past offences. In this sense the Apostle tells us,† that the Spirit himself asketh for us with inexpressible groans. Thus like the wind, which breathes where  
it

\* Eze. c. xxxvi      † Rom. viii.

it will, § sometimes in gentle breezes, and sometimes in rushing blasts, he cools by degrees the heat of glowing passion, and bends into duty the stubborn heart of sinners. Thus in fine like fire he warms the heart with holy desires, and kindles in her an ardent zeal for God's service.

Wind and fire were the palpable emblems, in which the Holy Ghost appeared to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. About the third hour of the day a noise from heaven, says St. Luke,† was suddenly heard, like that of a strong rushing wind, which filled the house they were sitting in. At the same instant there appeared unto them cloven tongues, as it were of fire, which rested over the head of each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

Being thus endued with strength from above, the Apostles were in a moment changed into other men. Trembling no longer under the apprehension of suffering for their faith, and no longer awed by the threats

threats of men, they followed the divine impulse and began to speak in different languages to the wondering people, as the Holy Ghost inspired. They, who had pusillanimously abandoned or denied their master in the hour of danger, and had since concealed themselves for fear of being known for his disciples, now rushed forth into the open streets of Jerusalem, and there publicly proclaimed the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Struck with astonishment at the things, which they heard and saw, and pierced moreover with a lively sorrow for their sins, about three thousand souls immediately embraced the Christian faith, and being baptised, were likewise blessed with the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Being fully convinced of the sacred truths they heard, they wholly turned their minds to the practice of those religious duties, which the Apostles taught them. Perfect charity amongst themselves, fervent prayer and a persevering attention to the divine service, attested the sincerity of their hearts and the truth of their belief. With cheerful harmony

mony they communed together, unanimously praising God, and taking their repast with gladness and simplicity of heart. The greater glory of God being their only aim, they had no private interest to pursue, no selfish passion to gratify : the advantage of riches and temporal possessions they thought no otherwise desirable, than as it enabled them to do good to their poorer Brethren.

These were the virtues, that adorned and sanctified the first Christians ; they were accompanied with the shining gifts of tongues and other miracles. To strike the senses, to wake the attention, and to rouse the faith of an unenlightened world, such prodigies were then requisite. Other motives of credibility more obvious and more lasting now offer themselves to our reason, in testimony of the Christian truths. The frequency of miracles has therefore ceased in these latter days. But altho' the holy Spirit is not pleased in the ordinary course of things to exhibit to our senses such striking proofs of his working power, yet it is not to be doubted,

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but he silently produces the same wonderful effects of grace in a soul, that has the happiness to receive him.

The charity of God, says St. Paul to the Romans,\* is diffused into our hearts by the holy Spirit, which has been given to us. By the infusion of that sanctifying grace, which we received at baptism, our souls were cleansed from sin, and became the living temples of the Holy Ghost. They were then invested with the robe of innocence and sanctity, with which our first parents had originally been endowed; they were then enriched with the gifts of infused virtues, and by adoption became entitled to the kingdom of heaven. The radical virtues of faith, hope, and charity, as so many inherent qualities, were then planted in us, and during the years of infancy remained waiting as it were for the dawn of reason to produce their respective acts. The tender mind opened by degrees, and being illumined by the quickening rays of grace, became sensible of a supernatural happiness, which

\* C. v.

which it was taught to hope and pray for. Formed by the early care of parental piety, the understanding began to acquire some knowledge of the mysteries of faith, and the will was gradually initiated in the great Christian duty of serving and loving God above all things. Such, my Brethren, is the charity, which our heavenly Father has displayed in favour of us his adoptive sons, and such are the gifts, which the Holy Ghost infused into our souls, even at a time, before we were fully capable of knowing the value of them.

Let us then with gratitude adore the divine goodness, which without any merit on our part has thus distinguished us preferably to thousands of our fellow mortals, who have been less favoured, tho' not less deserving than ourselves. In the second place let us look back and examine what use we have made of the divine gifts; whether we have improved or squandered them away; whether we have honour or disgrace, reward or punishment to expect in consequence. In the third place let us review

the present disposition of our souls, that by comparing the general tenour of our conduct with the principles of faith, we may be enabled to judge, whether the Spirit of God still dwells within us, or whether we have banished him from our breasts. For if the Spirit of God dwells in you, says St. Paul,\* he will vivify your mortal bodies ; he will influence the body of your actions, and inspire you with such sentiments, as actuate the sons of God. How far we are actuated by the holy Spirit of God, we must judge by the care we take of profiting by his precious gifts. For the Holy Ghost never fixes his abode in us, but he brings his gifts along with him.

His gifts, according to Isaiah,† are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and the fear of our Lord. By these gifts we are enlightened to know, and powerfully incited to fulfil every part of our Christian duty. The fear of our Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; and it puts us always upon our guard not to provoke

\* Rom. viii.

† C. xi.

voke his dreadful wrath. Piety prompts us to a devout and diligent performance of every religious duty. Knowledge teaches us the nature and force of our Christian obligations. Fortitude carries us thro' every difficulty, that occurs in the execution of them. Counsel discovers to us the deceitful arts of our spiritual enemies. Understanding opens our minds to the sublime truths of revelation. Wisdom in fine directs us in the pursuit of our last end, which is the full and everlasting possession of God in his glory. This sublime, this noble end, for which we have been created, the enlightened Christian keeps constantly in view, lest he chance to fail in the attainment of it.

Thus, my Brethren, does the Holy Ghost by his infused gifts direct and strengthen his faithful servants in the way of salvation. Under this divine influence the fervent Christian's study is to know and do the will of God in all things, to revere the sacred mysteries of faith, to conform in practice to the dictates of his belief, and prudently to guard against the delusive charms of a



false imposing world. Hence the studied knowledge of himself and God creates in him an equal diffidence of his own strength, and a firm reliance on the divine assistance. Hence arises on one hand a filial fear of offending God by sin, and on the other an earnest desire of obtaining those heavenly succours, which are necessary to support him in the day of trial. Hence in fine that Christian fortitude of mind, that unshaken attachment to every point of duty, which is obtained by prayer, and nourished by the unction of fervent piety.

Happy would it be, if the great body of Christians were animated by this holy Spirit. For notwithstanding their profession, all do not obey the gospel, as St. Paul tells the Romans,\* all do not adopt its maxims, nor fulfil its precepts. As tho' they had never engaged in their Creator's service, and never had renounced either the pomps or works of Satan, we see them busily employed in following and promoting what they solemnly abjured at the font of baptism. Heedless  
of

\* C. x.

of their promise they contract a friendly familiarity with a sinful world, they blindly run into the wild extravagancies of an expensive world, they glitter in the gorgeous pomps of pride, and wantonly vie with one another in their profusion of vanity and show. For all, that is in the world, says St. John, ¶ is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.

By the world, here mentioned by St. John, is undoubtedly meant the great bulk of mankind, who under the influence of corrupt nature seem to have no other than the present gratification of their earthly appetites in view, and to seek no other than a temporary happiness in the transient enjoyment of created goods: who blinded by selfish passions, and deceived by the shining appearances of false honour, concur as it were by general consent in setting up a common system of thinking and of acting according to certain principles of their own, in contradiction to the doctrine of the gos-

pel and spirit of Jesus Christ. This is the world, against which our blessed Saviour has pronounced the severest woes by reason of its scandals ; ‡ this is the world, which he will convict of sin ; † this is the world, for which he did not pray. § But notwithstanding the woes, which an unerring wisdom has pronounced against the world, its spirit is not broken, nor its influence on the minds of deluded Christians yet lessened. It continues still to war against the Almighty, it still spreads its baleful empire far and wide, to the manifest destruction of faith and morals, and drags the greater part of Christians captive into sin. Pleased with the splendid yoke, Christians become the willing slaves of sin, the devoted victims of fashion, of extravagance, and excess : without so much as a single day or perchance a single hour being allotted for devotion and serious reflection, they whirl from one scene of dissipation to another, and amidst the hurry of amusements forget they have either souls to save, or a God to serve.

Such,

‡ Mat. xviii.

† John xvi.

§ c. vii.

Such, my Brethren, is the world in general. Many Christians there also are, who having been once enlightened by the Holy Ghost, and still retaining some imperfect notions of their baptismal obligations, awkwardly divide their service between the world and God, and vainly strive to court the friendship of the one, without breaking with the other. As if it were not impossible \* to serve two different masters at the same time, they bow sometimes to one and sometimes to the other ; or as if God were not to be loved with their whole heart, they divide their affections between the Creator and his creatures, falsely fancying themselves acquitted of their whole duty by the imperfect performance of it in part only. Being unfortunately guided by worldly prudence, which is folly in the sight of God, and miserably led away by the attraction of bad example, they are deaf to the voice of good instruction, and shut their eyes against the light, which points out the path of salvation to them. Thus forming to themselves an

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erroneous

\* Mat. vi.



erroneous rule of conduct conformable to the mode and spirit of a philosophic age, they set aside the practical injunctions of the gospel, which they once were taught and once believed to be essential to true Christian piety. Their thoughts being chiefly turned, and their minds being strongly bent upon the fashionable dissipations of life, to dissipation and to fashion they devote their time, their study, and their incomes, at the expence of health and almost every domestic virtue. The business of salvation is the least of their concern, or at most considered only as the secondary object of their views. The duty of morning and evening prayer is consequently neglected : serious and pious reading, recollection of spirit, self-examination, and devout use of the holy sacraments, are set aside, as gloomy occupations and irksome restraints.

In souls like these the sacred motions of the Holy Ghost are no sooner felt than stifled ; the spirit of the world prevails, and all preparation for a future state is criminally neglected. Hence the light of divine  
faith

faith shines but faintly upon their understanding, and tho' it still kindles in the mind a general belief of all the sacred truths, which the Church of Christ believes and teaches, yet it is but a speculative and barren belief, which makes no impression upon the will, and produces not the works of salvation. Hence they become strangers to the knowledge of heavenly things, they follow no counsel but their own, they deceive themselves by false conceits, they will not be directed in the ways of God, nor attend to those practices of piety, which should render them habitually devout and obedient to God. Hence being deprived of those special graces, which ease the burden and sweeten the labours of the divine service, they groan beneath the weight of God's commandments, and fancy it too heavy for flesh and blood to bear. Hence being destitute of that true wisdom, which teaches men to act consistently with their belief, they either forget their last end, or criminally quit the path that should lead them to it. They therefore walk like blind men, says

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the Prophet Sophonias,\* because they have sinned against the Lord. They are of the world, and of the world they speak; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Numerous, my Brethren, is the class of Christians, who speak and act upon such principles. It behoves each one to take an impartial review of himself from time to time, to search the winding recesses of his heart, and to see by what spirit he is led in the general tenour of his conduct, whether by the principles of divine faith, or by the dictates of human wisdom: whether an eternal or a temporal interest, whether heavenly or earthly joys are the object of his pursuit: whether he has God or the world in view, whether he seeks the divine glory or his own in what he undertakes, whether in his daily actions it be his aim and intention to do the will of God or his own, to gratify self-love or to sanctify his soul, to provide in fine for the present life or the next. What are his acts of devotion to God?

What

What are his works of charity and benevolence to men? Is he steady and faithful in the discharge of his Christian duty, when temptations occur, and difficulties start up before him?

For in the course of a virtuous life many difficulties must necessarily occur; rough and narrow is the path, thro' which we have to pass; many restraints are laid upon the desires of corrupt nature, and many holy practices are to be observed, which an accommodating world pays no attention to. On many occasions God commands one thing, the world another. For as they have different interests and different ends in view, so different also are the means they use, and different is the service they require from their respective followers: consequently no one can serve them both. To our service God has a sovereign right, the world has none. For the reward of our service God promises an everlasting happiness, the world boastingly offers what it cannot give. God by granting us a rational use of the creatures, which he has ordained for our benefit  
and



and his own greater glory, encourages us to serve and love him as our chiefest good; the world by pampering our passions, and flattering our senses to excess, seduces us by degrees into its evil ways, while under the deceitful show of present happiness it hurries its crowding followers thro' the broad road to everlasting misery.

Wherefore let us review the present disposition of our hearts, and since we profess ourselves to be true adorers of the Most High, let us see by what spirit we are animated, and with what fidelity we act in his holy service. If upon examination we find, that by past irregularities we have given subject of sorrow to the holy Spirit of God, as St. Paul speaks to the Ephesians,\* let us speedily repent: with an unfeigned purpose of amendment let us confess our guilt, and seriously strive to obtain forgiveness for it: with the humble sentiments of David let us sue for mercy, and earnestly beg of God to create a clean heart within us, and to renew  
a right

\* C. iv.

a right spirit within our souls. For this end let us bend our knees with St. Paul, † before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that according to the riches of his glory he may give us inward strength by his Spirit to become steadfast in goodness, that Christ may dwell within our hearts by faith, and that being rooted and well-grounded in charity, we may abound in the grace of God and be filled with the unction of his holy Spirit.

Come, then, O holy Spirit, and kindle in us the fire of thy purest love. Banish from our hearts every inordinate desire, cleanse our souls from the dregs of sin, and sanctify them with thy heavenly graces. For from thee, who art the source of sanctity itself, every precious grace, and every perfect gift descends. Thou art our refuge in distress, our light in darkness, our support in difficulties, and our comfort in affliction. Help us therefore, O God, in our wants, enlighten us in our doubts, encourage us in our fears, warm us in our devotions, and confirm us  
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in our purpose of a virtuous life, that after a happy death we may be admitted to see and enjoy, to adore and love thee in thy heavenly kingdom for evermore.

DISCOURSE

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## DISCOURSE XIII.

UPON THE OBLIGATION OF KNOWING JESUS  
CHRIST.

*This is life everlasting, that they know thee,  
the only true God, and whom thou hast sent  
Jesus Christ. John, c. xvii. v. 3.*

**M**AN has but to know himself, and he will know there is a God. By considering the contingency of his own existence he will know there is a self-existing God, that made him. For having been once nothing, he will see, that he might have remained so still, that from himself he could never have begun to exist, that he has consequently received his existence from that supreme and independent Being, who has had no beginning. From the visible beauties of the creation, that surround him, he will by reflection come to the knowledge of the invisible Creator of them, so as to confess the wisdom, the power,  
the



the goodness, and boundless perfection of his divinity in the wonderful works he has wrought.\* By viewing the stated seasons of the year, the regular succession of day and night, the unvariable motion of the sun, moon, and stars, the whole harmonious system in fine of the universe, he will observe, that this great Creator of all things is a lover of order, that he has established order amongst all his works, and has fixed the laws, by which he sweetly rules and governs all his creatures. Hence the rational and enlightened man will undoubtedly conclude, that he also has certain laws and precepts to observe, that he has his sphere allotted him wherein to move, and that by a due subordination to the powers, which providence has placed above him, he is to honour and glorify the God, to whose divine bounty he is indebted for all he has.

But to deserve life everlasting, something more than the bare knowledge of a supreme Being is absolutely required of us. For he,  
who

\* Rom. i.

who cometh to God, says St. Paul,\* must believe not only that he is, but that he moreover is the rewarder of those, who seek him. Hence necessarily springs the knowledge of God's infinite justice and mercy in the punishment of vice and the reward of virtue. To escape the one and to obtain the other, we then must know the end, for which God has ordained us, we must know the means, to which the attainment of that end is annexed, we must be faithful in fine in the performance of all those christian duties, without which we can form no just title to the kingdom of heaven. Of the unspeakable joys of heaven, for which we have been created, of the adorable Trinity of Persons in one undivided nature of the Godhead, of the temporal incarnation of the eternal Son of God for our redemption, and of all the other divine truths, which come not within the reach of our senses, we can have no other knowledge, than what God has been pleased to reveal. That this knowledge may profit us unto life everlasting

\* Heb. xi.

ing, we must receive it with a firm faith, grounded on the infallible word of God, who neither can deceive nor be deceived. The obligation then of knowing Jesus Christ, through whom all the divine truths of Christianity have been revealed, is strictly incumbent upon all, who aspire to everlasting life.

Religion, as it forms one complete system of faith and morality, is considered by St. Paul \* as a stately edifice, raised by the hand of God for the spiritual habitation of his holy Spirit, of which Christ Jesus himself is the chief corner-stone. On him, as the only foundation of all true sanctity, our hope of salvation is firmly built. For no one, says the same Apostle to the Corinthians, § can lay any other foundation but that which is already laid, which is Christ Jesus. Therefore for the attainment of everlasting life † it is as essential for us to know and to believe in Jesus Christ our only Saviour and Redeemer, as it is to know and believe in the one only and true living God.

\* Eph. ii.

§ 1 Cor. iii.

† John xvii.

God. For there is no salvation in any other, ‡ neither is there any other name under heaven given to men, whereby we can be saved. Now as every rational man cannot but wish to be happy, he must also be naturally eager to know, what will make him eternally so. And what is it? It is to know Jesus Christ. To possess ourselves of this sublime, of this important, and of this necessary knowledge for salvation we must know, what Jesus Christ is by nature, and what he is by office in the work of our redemption.

Jesus Christ in one and the same person unites two natures, the human and divine. Jesus Christ therefore by nature is both God and Man. His Person is divine; he is the second Person of the most blessed Trinity, and is eternal. Were he only God, he could not have died nor redeemed us by his sufferings. For God in his divine nature is immortal and incapable of suffering. Or were he only man, neither his sufferings nor his death could have been accepted as  
an

‡ Acts iv.



an adequate satisfaction to the divine justice for the atonement of our sins. But St. Paul assures us,\* that we are now justified by his blood, and reconciled again to God by the death of his Son. The merits therefore of the Son of Man being united with the sanctity of the Son of God, their value was infinite, and Jesus Christ has thereby fully expiated the guilt of sin and obtained our pardon.

To ascertain the divinity as well as the humanity of Jesus Christ, we have but to inform ourselves of those undoubted truths, which he has been pleased to reveal concerning himself in the holy Scriptures. If by faith we ascend with the inspired Evangelist to the inaccessible light of the Most High, to the great Holy of Holies, we shall find him in the bosom of the eternal Father, without beginning and without end, in the full glory of his immutable existence, not made nor created, but begotten before all ages, the splendour of his Father's glory and the figure of his substance. § He is the

\* Rom. v.      § Heb. i.

the divine Word, whose existence is with God from eternity, he is God himself, † by whom all things have been made. Then if we turn our eyes from heaven and look down upon Nazareth, at the time that the angel Gabriel was sent thither by God to confer with the Virgin Mary about the mystery of the Incarnation, ‡ we shall find the same eternal Word made man in the pure womb of Mary, and dwelling in human form amongst us. Jesus therefore from the time of his Incarnation has added in himself the nature of man to the nature of God; consequently he is truly God and truly man. He is necessarily God from all eternity; for God can have no beginning. But he is freely man, and that only since the time of his conception by the power and virtue of the Holy Ghost. For it was not by necessity, but by choice, that he descended from heaven and became man.

The choice, my brethren, was singular and wonderful. By that singular choice the Son of God descended from his throne  
of

† John i.      ‡ Luke i.

of glory, and clothing himself with the lowly form of human nature entered into this vale of tears to lead a suffering and painful life, which he was to close with an ignominious death. What could be his motive for determining on such a choice? It was his love for man. God has so loved the world, says St. John,\* as to give his only begotten Son for its redemption. Man had been originally created by him in a state of perfect innocence with a title to a supernatural reward in heaven on the sole condition of observing but one single precept. But the first man by an abuse of his free will transgressed that precept, and thereby forfeited his original title to heaven without the possibility of recovering it again by any atonement he himself could make. The whole human race was therefore plunged into the depth of miseries, wallowing in corruption and groaning for ages under the tyranny of sin, till Jesus by the impulse of his own infinite mercy was pleased to become our Saviour, our Mediator, and

\* C. iii.



and Redeemer. Legions of Angels had also sinned, but such mercy from their Creator they have not found. Hurlled down in the blossom of their pride from heaven into the burning lake, they lie ingulfed in endless torments without the smallest hope of redemption. To immortal spirits, the once shining lights of heaven, is refused that grace of mercy, † which has been granted us. How great, how singular, my brethren, is this grace of predilection? How wonderful is the preference? We had done nothing and we could do nothing to deserve it. Eternal thanks then be to the Father of mercies, the God of all consolation, who has thus rescued us from the jaws of perdition by Jesus Christ his only Son our Redeemer.

The inestimable grace of redemption being thus gratuitously reserved for lost man, as the Scriptures testify, in preference to the fallen Angels, it behoves us next to consider what it has cost Jesus Christ to ransom our souls from sin. For the price

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† • Peter ii.



he has given infinitely exceeds the most valuable treasures of the whole earth, it is nothing less than his own most precious blood plenteously spilt with every mark of the kindest goodness and fatherly affection. Now if the bare ransom of our souls has been so highly rated by the eternal wisdom itself, it is evident the salvation of them is too precious and too interesting to be neglected by us. Let us give thanks to God the Father, says St. Paul,\* who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the Saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath transplanted us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption by his blood, who is the image of the invisible God. For by him were made all things in heaven and on the earth, visible and invisible. All things were made by him and in him; he is before all, and all things subsist in him. He is also the head of his body the church, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For in him it

hath

\* Col. i.

hath seemed good, that all fulness should inhabit, and by him to reconcile all things to himself, making peace by the blood he shed upon his cross. And you also hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh by death, to present you holy and unspotted and blameless before him, provided you continue faithful and settled in the truth, which has been preached to you.

Therefore it was not by the bare union of human nature to the divine, nor by the tears he shed in Bethlehem, nor by the blood he spilt at his circumcision, at his scourging at the pillar, or at his crowning with thorns, that Jesus Christ was pleased to consummate the work of man's redemption. The effusion of all his blood to the last drop upon a disgraceful cross he deemed not too much for the ransom of our souls. How precious, exclaims St. Austin,\* is the price, which our blessed Lord has given for the redemption of lost man ! Let the whole world adore the divine goodness ; let all men unite in thankfully acknowledging the

richness of so infinite a mercy, and with a lively faith let each one say to God his Saviour, Great, O Lord, is my guilt, but greater is thy redemption !

What return, my Brethren, can you make suitable to so much generosity, to so much love ? What return do you resolve to make ? Consider the life, the hardships, the painful toils and sufferings of Jesus Christ your Saviour from his birth in Bethlehem to his crucifixion on Mount Calvary : consider the labours of his evangelical mission, his fatiguing journeys by day, his watchings in prayer by night, his fasts, his hunger and thirst, his persecutions, his torments, his passion, his bitter agony and death : consider moreover, that he freely and by choice underwent all this for your sakes, to procure you happiness and everlasting life, and then see if an offer of your heart, if a tender of your service be too much to present him with. Mean and insignificant is the offer in comparison of the great things he has done for you ; but of your own you have nothing greater, and nothing better to present.



sent. Present him that with sincere sentiments of humble gratitude, and he requires no more. The charity of Christ urges us, says St. Paul, † to give ourselves to him, knowing, that they who live, may not now live to themselves, but to him, who died and rose again for them. For Christ died and rose again for all.

The knowledge therefore of what Christ has suffered and done for us must necessarily imprint upon our minds the most lively sense of religious gratitude, and call forth all the powers of our soul to love and serve him well. For should we remain unmoved and as it were insensible of the inestimable grace of redemption, after having known it, we should become the most undeserving of men. But to be insensible or to incur the just reproach of insensibility it is not necessary, that we should absolutely be either ignorant or forgetful of the favours we have received. For altho' we have heard, altho' we believe what our blessed Redeemer has suffered for us, altho' we

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may

† 2 Cor. v.



may have been softened into compassion, and have dropt a passing tear at the rehearsal of his cruel sufferings, yet if that knowledge we have acquired, if that belief we profess, and if that transient compassion we have felt, has no influence upon our moral or religious conduct, we still remain insensible of our duty, because blind to our own essential interest, deaf to the voice of conscience, and equally unmoved at our Saviour's sufferings and his love.

There is a wide difference, says St. Austin,\* between believing Christ and believing in Christ. To believe Christ is to believe him to be our Saviour and Redeemer, true God and true man; it is to believe all he has taught us to be most certainly true. This every Christian, who knows the articles of Christian belief, most firmly believes. But to believe in Christ is in practice to adopt the doctrine of his gospel, to fulfil his precepts, and to comply with the ordinances of his holy law. Is this, my Brethren, your practice, is this your belief? Is it your general

\* Serm. 144, de verb. Evan.

neral intention to please and honour God in all you do? Is the general conduct of your lives directed to the greater glory and service of your Creator? Are your connexions in life formed upon the principle of duty and of well-ordered charity? Are your conversations with men sober, upright, benevolent and chaste? Are your dealings just, open, candid, and honest? Are your expences regulated by the rules of prudence, moderation, and decorum, suitable to your state? Are your days and nights sanctified by the use of morning and evening prayer? Is the wholesome law of abstinence and fasting complied with according to your abilities? Is the great obligation of public worship duly fulfilled upon the days commanded to be kept holy?

We live in the midst of a corrupt world, in the midst of enemies to the cross of Christ. The powers of seduction were never more brilliant or more openly displayed than in the present age. A rage for dissipation, for idle amusements, and extravagance of dress has spread like a swelling torrent over all the

land, and great must be our caution not to be carried down the stream with the intoxicated crowd to ruin and distress. The perillous times, mentioned by the Apostles,\* are at hand, when false teachers shall bring in sects of perdition, and deny the Lord, who redeemed them: men lovers of themselves, without affection, without peace, without kindness, proud, impious, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, traitors, stubborn, lovers of pleasures more than of God, having indeed the appearance of piety but denying its power, men in fine corrupted in mind, reprobate in point of faith, and never attaining to the knowledge of truth.

To view the Christian world and to judge by what passes in it is there not sufficient ground to conclude, that Jesus Christ is little known by the generality of those, who by name profess themselves his disciples, and the followers of his holy religion? Upon those, who openly deny or impugn his divinity, sentence is already given, † because they believe not in the name of the only-begotten

\* Tim. iii. & Pet. ii.      † John iii.



begotten Son of God. But to that numerous class of Christians, whose thoughts, whose plans and projects are wholly bent on worldly gain, on worldly advantages and enjoyments, without the least concern or effort to provide for a future life, is the gospel of Jesus known? To those, who by habit make the duties of religion give place to their amusements, to their indolence, to their temporal interest and convenience, are the precepts of Jesus known? To those who neglect to curb their anger, and to break their fiery temper into subjection, is the meekness and humility of Jesus known? To those, who instead of improving their talents for the benefit of themselves or others, waste their time in one continued train of unprofitable and vain diversions, is the abnegation and the cross of Jesus known? The declaration of Jesus nevertheless is still true,\* that all and every one, who are willing to come after him, must deny themselves, must take up their cross, and follow him, else they are not worthy of him.

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Jesus

\* Mat. x. 16.



Jesus Christ is the true light, who by his doctrine and example enlightens every man, that cometh into the world. But the world, that is to say, the great bulk of mankind living in the world, being either blinded by passion or misled by error, will neither follow nor behold the light. They chuse rather to remain in their cherished darkness, ¶ lest they should see the evil they are doing, and be forced to abandon the system they have adopted. Too self-sufficient to listen to instruction in the business of salvation, too implicitly tenacious of their own opinion to believe themselves wrong, too strongly by-  
 assed in fine by human considerations to admit the gospel truths in their full force, they either seek to excuse their conduct by the example of others, or to shelter themselves under the shield of worldly prudence. But worldly prudence in eluding the force of truth is mere folly in the sight of God.

Ours, they cry, is an enlightened age. In polite and human learning, in the progress of arts and sciences, in the discovery of new  
 lands.

lands and seas, in its political improvements and mechanical inventions, it may be so. That is not the knowledge of eternal life. The present age may be enlightened, it may shine in the art of acquiring and squandering away a fortune; it may excel in knowing the luxuries and expensive vanities of life to greater perfection, than they were ever known by our more sober and more temperate forefathers. Such a knowledge may teach man how to gratify his sensual appetites, not how to sanctify or to save his soul. When Christians talk of an enlightened age, one would suppose them to mean, if they mean any thing serious, that the science of salvation is better understood, better taught, or better practised in the present, than in any former age. Is it so in fact? View the times, view the religion, view the manners of the present race, and judge. Does it appear, that Christians now-a-days are better grounded in the principles of true religion, better skilled in the truths of divine revelation, or better versed in the exercise of the evangelical virtues? Has not

the bold and rapid progress of vice and immorality almost darkened or extinguished the light of faith in the minds of many? Destitute of that divine light, will Christians presume to say, that they have discovered a more compendious or a more commodious way to heaven in these latter days, than was ever known in the most pure and early times of Christianity? Christians, do not deceive yourselves. See, if this presumption of an enlightened age be sufficiently founded for any rational man to rely on? See, if it be safe or prudent for you to rest your hope of salvation on it. There is a way, says the wise man,\* which to a man seems right, and the ends thereof terminate in death. The way, that leads to life, we know is narrow, and few there are who find it.† Vain therefore and wicked would be the attempt of presumptuous man to shorten and enlarge it, as should suit their temporal interest and ease. Yet such is the attempt, and such the spirit of these innovating times. For a daring and licentious spirit has gone forth.

The

\* Prov. xvi.      † Mat. vii.



The spirit of anarchy and confusion, the spirit of deism and infidelity, under the specious but fallacious name of discerning philosophy, has walked thro' the nations, and under the pretence of establishing the rights of man, has overset the established order of civil society wherever it has been admitted. At its savage command the social rights of man have been despotically suppressed, the earth has been drenched with human blood, the monuments of taste and art have been wantonly destroyed, and every distinction of rank and subordination has been arbitrarily blotted out. Religion mourns her altars overturned, her sanctuary profaned, her laws annihilated, her temples erased, her ministers displaced and persecuted, some massacred, some imprisoned, others banished and exposed to perish by want, by nakedness, by famine, and every misery of a lingering death. Are these the characteristics of an enlightened age? Are these the marks of a wise philosophy? Is this their boasted system of reason and philanthropy? Great God! can men call them-

selves



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felves Christians, and avow these unchristian deeds? Can men call themselves the friends of a Christian people, and applaud the system of oppression, of rapine, and sacrilege?

Of the ancient philosophers St. Paul † testifies, that professing themselves wise they became fools. Because when they had known God, they glorified him not as God, but were lost in their own imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. And as they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate sense, permitting them to do the things, that are not decent, being filled with all iniquity, with malice, with envy, with murder, with strife and deceit without trust, without feeling, without mercy. Such is the portrait, drawn by the Apostle's pen, of the heathen sages. Is it too much to say, that it also is a strong resemblance of the modern philosophers, the Voltaires, the Rousseaus, the D'Alemberts, the Diderots, and some perchance of our own countrymen, who have impiously levelled the shafts of

† Rom. i.



of wit and ridicule against all, that is respectable and sacred? But you, my Brethren, have not in this manner learnt Christ.\* If yet you have heard him, and still retain the principles of truth, which have been taught you in your earliest youth. For in vain will you make profession of being the followers of Christ, if you are either ignorant or neglectful of his precepts. Suffer not yourselves to be seduced by the example or smooth language of the many, who tread the broad way to perdition.||

Be ye therefore strong in faith, as the Apostle admonishes, § that you may resist the enemies of your salvation, and be fervent in spirit, that you may obtain the reward promised to your labours. Strait is the gate, that opens into life. Serious endeavours and strong exertion is required to enter through it. But be not dejected; the strife lasts not long; the victory is in your own hands; the glory is immortal, the crown everlasting. But remember no one shall be crowned, who has not strove conformably

\* Eph. iv.

|| Mat. vii.

§ 1 Peter v.



conformably to the rules, which require, that he not only should decline from evil, but that he should also do good. No barren faith without good works, no speculative knowledge of the truth without practice, no public profession in fine of the true religion without conforming to its precepts will ever entitle you to the kingdom of heaven. The infernal spirits even believe and tremble, says St. James,† but their faith will never save them. The five foolish virgins, mentioned by our blessed Saviour as a warning to us,\* had their lamps, the emblems of faith, but having no oil, the flame of charity was extinct. They notwithstanding composedly took their rest with the other five prudent virgins, when on a sudden in the middle of the night, and in the middle of their sleep, they were unexpectedly called upon to attend the heavenly bridegroom. They all arose; the five, who were prepared, entered in with him to the nuptials, and the door was immediately shut. Then came the other five, who had  
gone

† C. ii.      • Mat. xxv.

gone to provide themselves with oil, and begged to be admitted. But having foolishly lost the precious moment, they presented themselves too late, and the only answer they could get was, I know you not. Watch therefore, says our blessed Lord, and be ye always prepared, because ye know not the day nor the hour, when the Son of man will come. For not every one, that cries out to me, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but who does the will of my Father, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Hence the slothful servant, ¶ who had buried his talent in the earth and taken no pains to improve it, is ordered to be cast into outer darkness, where he must eternally weep and gnash his teeth in despair.

O my Brethren, be ye wise in time, and whilst you can, whilst the light of grace shines upon you, secure your election to happiness by good works. For the night will come, when you will not be able to see or to perform your work in the manner that is required.

required. The salvation of your soul is a mighty task ; it is above the power of nature unsupported by divine grace, and that grace is not usually granted but to those, who earnestly pray, and seriously labour to obtain it. We have powerful enemies to contend with. We have all the powers, that a flattering and deceitful world can muster up to seduce us. We have the devil, who is constantly upon his round, seeking whom he may devour. † We have in fine our own domestic enemies, our concupiscence and passions lurking within us, ever treacherous and ever ready to rebel at the first brisk impression that is made upon our outward senses. These enemies must be diligently watched, vigorously checked, and effectually subdued, before we can reap the crown of victory.

To make profession of the Christian religion and neglect its precepts, is in fact to make a mockery of the truths it teaches. To respect the speculative and to slight the practical points of religion, is to make a division

† 1 Peter v.



vision in faith ; it is to divide one part of  
 the law from the other, as if all did not bind  
 alike ; it is to divide Jesus Christ from him-  
 self ; it is in a word to attempt what Jesus  
 Christ has declared not possible for any man  
 to do, to serve God and Mammon at the  
 same time. Strange and unaccountable as  
 such a conduct may appear to cool reason,  
 is it not evinced by facts, that such more or  
 less is the conduct of the great majority of  
 Christians in the world ? Whether from  
 the instability or depravity of the human  
 heart, whether from inattention or a fond  
 familiarity with the writings and language  
 of deists and unbelievers the spreading evil  
 may arise, is it not to be apprehended, that  
 by many Christians such a conduct is thought  
 not only excusable, but even justified by  
 custom ? Most certainly it too visibly ap-  
 pears, that the sacred principles of Christi-  
 anity are either little known or greatly dis-  
 regarded, that comparatively speaking few  
 Christians in the world are acquainted with  
 the great obligation of knowing Jesus Christ,  
 and of believing in him as is requisite for  
 salvation ?



salvation? I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, said our blessed Saviour,\* because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent in their own conceits, and hast revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father, for so it hath seemed good to thee. Happy they, to whom the Father has revealed the knowledge of salvation; more happy still, if with a docile and humble heart they cherish and embrace it; but most wretched, should they perversely shun or reject it.

Give thanks, my Brethren, for having had the grace to know Jesus Christ, your Saviour and Redeemer; humbly strive to ground yourselves in that important knowledge still more and more. You have dutifully learnt, what an incarnate God has been pleased to do and suffer for you. He once died for your redemption, he rose again for your justification, and is now ascended into heaven, that he may draw your hearts thither after him in expectation of everlasting glory. By his holy word he has taught  
you

\* Mat. xi.

you what to believe, what to practise, and what to hope for in the life to come. You have been timely instructed in that essential knowledge, upon conviction you freely believe, and embrace all the gospel teaches. Be ye ever careful not to betray the truth by any wilful error in matters of faith, nor to disgrace the truth by any immoral habit in the conduct of your lives. You are Christians ; by profession you are the followers of Jesus Christ the crucified ; by your baptismal engagements you are the champions of his holy law, and the imitators of his divine virtues. Scorn to debase your Christian dignity by stooping to sinful actions forbidden by the law. Thro' the merits of your Redeemer humbly beg in your most fervent prayers, that the Father of lights will so enlighten your understanding, and so direct your will by his holy grace, that you may always distinguish and always follow the way, that leads to eternal life.

## DISCOURSE XIV.

UPON MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS CHRIST.

*Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.*  
 Luke c. i. v. 28.

**W**HEN the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to announce to Mary the mystery of the Incarnation, he began by addressing her in these words, Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women. In these few but expressive words is comprised the most sublime and most complete panegyric, that was ever spoken of a pure creature. To be sanctified in his mother's womb was the singular privilege of the Baptist; to be prevented by the early infusions of divine grace, and to shine with the rich ornaments of grace, has been the privilege of Saints; but to be full of grace, and to be replenished with the overflowing spring of divine grace,

was

was the prerogative of Mary. God is with all his creatures by the gift of creation and preservation; he is with all Christians by the grace of adoption; he is with his more faithful servants by the special communication of his love and sanctity. But he is with Mary in a manner far above all this, else the Angel had said no more than was applicable to the other elect of God, nothing which distinguished Mary from the rest of Saints. Yes, my Brethren, the Angel discovered in Mary something great, something new and singular, which raised her infinitely above the rank of God's most cherished favourites, something, which rendered her the most holy and the most blessed of women.

God by his preventing graces had so prepared the soul of Mary from the very moment of her conception, that he would not suffer it to be sullied with the least stain of sin. This his own infinite wisdom seems to have required, as becoming his sanctity. For having decreed from all eternity to take flesh of her flesh in the second Person of the  
 most



most blessed Trinity, it became both his sanctity and wisdom to enrich her with all those graces, and to sanctify her with all those singular gifts of the Holy Ghost, which become the dignity of the Mother of God. By the choice, which the Son of God made of Mary to become his mother, he has honoured her above all the daughters of Eve: he has exalted her to a dignity the most sublime that a pure creature is capable of, to a dignity above all, that is not God. This divine choice then is the foundation of Mary's greatness. The quality of mother to the Word incarnate lifts her to a rank of greatness, which no pure creature can ever equal. It is a greatness, which she has received from the liberal hand of God; a greatness, to which she could have never had a title by any previous merit of her own; it therefore leaves her, notwithstanding her singular eminence, in the rank of a pure creature.

In the boundless prospect of his creative power the Almighty cast an eye of predilection upon Mary. Before he formed the  
heavens

heavens or laid the foundations of the earth, he selected Mary in preference to all other possible beings, and predestined her before all other women to co-operate with his holy Spirit in giving a Saviour to mankind. Mary on her part was ever faithful in corresponding with the designs of God; she was studious to improve the rich talents, that were given her, and carefully employed the whole plenitude of grace, with which she abounded, for her still greater and greater increase in sanctity and all virtues. By the first she claims our admiration and esteem, by the second she excites our imitation and practice in every perfect virtue.

From the testimonies of holy writ, from the primitive and constant doctrine of the Catholic Church, and from the unanimous consent of all nations, who have embraced her faith and lived in communion with her, it is evinced, that the Second Person of the blessed Trinity is the true and only-begotten Son of the Father; that he is consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost before all ages; that for us men and

for our salvation he descended from heaven, took flesh in the womb of the virgin Mary, was born of her in Bethlehem, and is called Jesus ; that the virgin Mary is consequently the Mother of Jesus, and truly the Mother of God. She is expressly stiled so by St. John,\* so is she likewise stiled by St. Luke. § Elizabeth upon Mary's entering her house was filled with the Holy Ghost, and in ecstasy exclaimed, " Whence is it, that the mother of my Lord should come to me ? Blessed art thou, O Mary, amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." Glowing with the most lively sentiments of respect and esteem, Elizabeth was struck with astonishment at the sublime maternity of the virgin on one hand, and at her humble condescension in coming to visit her on the other. Let us enter with Elizabeth into the consideration of Mary's divine maternity, and from thence draw the sentiments of piety and esteem suitable to her merit.

Let us lift up our thoughts above all, that we behold great and wonderful in the creation ;



ation ; let us fix our eye upon the incomprehensible majesty of God himself, and contemplate the immense, the eternal, and unbounded greatness of his Being, in respect of whom all the beings, that exist in the vast circumference of heaven and earth, are not so much as the smallest atom in respect of the universe. Full of this thought, let us now turn to Mary, and in her we shall behold the mother of this great, of this eternal, of this immense, and incomprehensible God. For since the eternal Son has deigned to assume the nature of man and to become incarnate in her womb, the substance of Mary is become the substance of Jesus Christ. For of her he was truly conceived, of her virginal substance his sacred body was truly formed, and to him she may truly say, Thou art my Son.\* Jesus therefore being truly God, and Mary being the mother of Jesus, as the Scriptures testify,¶ she is consequently the Mother of God, as the holy Catholic Church has always believed and taught. Nestorius Bishop of Constan-

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tinople,

\* Luke i. ¶ John ii.



tinople, in the fifth century wickedly attempted to dispute her this glorious title: but the Church assembled in a general Council at Ephesus, about the year 430, and condemned his heterodox assertion. The assertion was too glaringly repugnant to the words of scripture, as well as to the pious sentiments of the faithful, ever to gain credit in any Christian congregation, a few Greeks excepted. Mary therefore remains in full possession of her exalted title with the Catholic body of orthodox believers.

Mary in consequence of the Incarnation, entered into as close an union with the Word incarnate, as can possibly be formed between a mother and her son. She carried him for nine months within her womb, she then brought him forth, she nourished him with her milk, she carested him in her arms, and embraced him with all those fond endearments, which usually pass between a mother and her first-born. The divine infant no doubt repaid her love for love, and that even at an age, when other infants are insensible of a mother's care. But as he advanced

vanced in years, he was pleased to show for our example what his filial sentiments were towards his virgin mother. For he considered her as his mother, treated her as his mother, and obeyed her as his mother. Jesus then conceived for Mary all those sentiments of affection, of respect and duty, which every virtuous son has for a virtuous parent; and Mary in the house of Nazareth received from Jesus all those filial offices of attention and obedience, which every good mother is entitled to from a dutiful son. That the great Creator of the universe should make himself thus subject to his own creature, that the sovereign ruler of men and Angels should submit to the parental command of a lowly virgin, that the Word incarnate in flesh should pay obedience to Mary, and such an obedience, as the principle of duty requires from a son to his parent, is a mystery we could never have conceived, had not the Evangelist in express terms informed us of it. Jesus went down

with Joseph and Mary to Nazareth, says St. Luke,\* and was subject to them.

How glorious to Mary is this ineffable obedience of her son, and how sublime is the idea it conveys of her maternal pre-eminence? By this she is raised infinitely above the powers and principalities of heaven. They are but ministering spirits and servants of the most High; she is their queen, she is the mother of the most High, the eternal Word was obedient to her. Behold the Virgin now raised to a state of pre-eminence far beyond the reach of every other creature, even the most powerful; she is raised in dignity above every other thing, that is or can be created. God in his omnipotence can call into existence an endless variety of creatures far more excellent than those, which already exist: but however excellent or however qualified those creatures may be, there is no doubt, but they would all look up to Mary as to a superiour being. They would only rank with the servants and domestics of God; the prerogative of mother

\* C. ii.



ther of God would be peculiar to Mary. Infinite therefore would be the rank of Mary above them; for between the mother of God and the servants of God infinite is the distance, as St. John Damascen remarks.†

Mary is the most worthy mother of God, says the learned St. Bonaventure,¶ nor can God create a more worthy. He can indeed create a greater world, he can create a more exalted heaven; but a mother more great or more exalted, than the mother of God he cannot create. In this the virgin has no equal. Above her there is nothing, but what is increated and eternal: below her there is every thing, that has been created, the humanity of her divine Son only excepted. God alone is her superior; the most perfect of his creatures is her inferior. Look thro' all the ranks of the heavenly host, survey the shining quires of Thrones, of Dominations, of Principalties, and Powers, view the other orders of celestial Spirits, and single out the brightest Seraphim about the throne of God: fancy him, if you will, in

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grace

† De doræ. Marid. Serm. i.

¶ In Spec. Lec. v.



grace and perfection to surpass every other Angel, as far as the first Cherubim excels the meanest insect, that crawls upon the earth: this bright, this exalted Seraphim will still look up to Mary as to his queen and sovereign lady.

But, to carry the thought still higher, we know, that between this exalted Seraphim and God there is a boundless space, in which God may range a series of pure creatures one above the other more and more perfect without end. Let us now in imagination go over that boundless space, and by contemplating the progressive excellence of those creatures mount as by so many steps towards the summit of Mary's glory; we never should come near it. For being exalted by the high prerogative of her divine maternity to a rank, which is infinitely superiour to every possible rank of pure creatures, she shines in a sphere infinitely too high to be equalled by any other. The transcendent splendour of Mary's dignity outshines the lustre of all the Saints and Angels put together. For being the mother

ther of their Creator she is queen of them all.

As the mother of Jesus she enters into as close an alliance with the three divine Persons, as a pure creature is capable of. In this quality she is become the virgin spouse of the Holy Ghost ; for by the power and virtue of the Holy Ghost she conceived her divine Son. In this quality she is become the mother of God's eternal Son : for by his taking flesh of her flesh God the Son in his humanity is as truly of the same nature with Mary, as in his divinity he is of the same nature with the Father. In consequence of this ineffable alliance, which Mary contracted with the three divine Persons by being the mother of the Son, there can be no doubt, but the whole blessed Trinity concurred in heaping such treasures of grace and sanctity upon her, as became the wisdom, the power, and majesty of the Godhead. For it seems fitting, that between the Son and the mother there should be a congruous similitude of spiritual gifts and ornaments, so far at least as the limited na-

ture of a human soul will admit, and that the dignity of such a mother should be suitably supported by a rich accumulation of such graces, as became the sanctity of such a Son. It was becoming, says St. Anselm,\* that the blessed Virgin should be endowed with such shining purity, than which a greater under God cannot be conceived.

This the eternal Father owed to his Son's glory as well as to his own. For in consequence of the choice he had made of her above all other women, it became him in his wisdom to make her worthy of the Son, of whom he was the Father. This the Holy Ghost owed to his immaculate spouse, of whose virginal substance the substance of Christ's body by his ineffable operation was to be formed. This in fine the eternal Son owed to his virgin mother, for whom he undoubtedly entertained all those sentiments of affection, which filial piety naturally inspires. Now if Jesus so loves those, who love him, as to come in a special manner to them and to make his abode with them, ‡  
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\* Serm. de Concep.

‡ John xiv.



how strong must have been his love for Mary his mother, who on many accounts was so worthy of his love? She loved him as her God, as her Creator, and Redeemer: she loved him as the source and center of all good, she loved him as her Son with the most fond and most pure affection of a parent. Can it be supposed, that Jesus as her Son would let himself be outdone in the duty of reciprocal love and affection?

But the love, which a dutiful Son feels for a fond parent, lies not confined in the heart alone; it bursts forth like an active flame, and shows itself by benevolent and generous acts of duty. Jesus, who is the most perfect model of all virtues, and who had taken upon himself even the duty of a son, so as to fulfil all justice, ¶ undoubtedly accompanied the love he bore his mother, with all those acts of benevolence and generosity, which her rank and his own divine character seemed to require. Should any potent prince consent to leave his royal parent unendowed and unnoticed upon a



level with the common class of his other subjects, he would most certainly be thought deficient in the point of filial duty and attention. We must therefore conclude, that the meek and humble Jesus endowed his beloved mother with such treasures of his sanctifying graces, as became a God of infinite bounty to bestow. From her he had received his body and that external likeness of features, which rendered him amiable in the eyes of all, who beheld him. His filial love therefore could do no less than make her a return of those internal beauties, that adorned her soul, and made it like to his.

This wonderful communication of corporal and spiritual endowments, that passed between the mother and the Son, renders Mary the most holy, the most blessed, and the most honoured amongst women. By this she is become the seat of wisdom, the ark of the new covenant, our powerful advocate and intercessor with her Son in our most urgent wants. Her Son, whom she carried for nine months in her chaste womb,  
and

and when born suckled at her breasts, will refuse her nothing, that she asks. At her intercession he wrought his first miracle by changing water into wine.† To her maternal care he recommended us in the person of St. John, by his dying words upon the cross.\* Her translation from earth to heaven has not lessened her charity, it has not altered the pious sentiments of her heart, nor diminished her powerful interest with her Son. Her zeal for the divine honour is quickened by the happiness she enjoys in God; her charity for us the still banished sons of Eve is enlivened by the desire she has of seeing us in heaven to partake of the same happiness.

These amiable qualities of the Virgin, my Brethren, merit your attention. Her divine maternity claims your veneration, her powerful interest in heaven commands your confidence. Wherefore hesitate not to put yourselves under her special patronage, implore her intercession in all your wants, invoke her aid in the times of peril and temptation.

† John ii.

\* C. xix.

temptation. § For she is the refuge of sinners, she is the comfort of the afflicted, and the help of all Christians. She is the mother of Jesus, she is also your mother in Christ the Saviour of mankind. The many festivals instituted by the Church in her memory, and the many Churches erected to God under her name and protection, are so many standing monuments of the devotion paid her by the Christian world. All the holy Fathers, as their writings testify, are unanimous in their encomiums and devotion to Mary the ever-glorious Virgin, the immaculate Mother of God. Let us cast ourselves at the feet of Mary, says St. Bernard, || let us put ourselves under her protection, and with the warmest affection of our hearts, with the tenderest emotion of our souls, let us implore her assistance. As long as we strictly confine ourselves within the

§ The Saints interpose with God by their supplications, says an enlightened Prelate of the established Church, and meditate by their prayers. By this Christ is not wronged in his meditation: it is no impiety to say, *Holy Mary, pray for us.* Bishop Montague, *In Antid. and of Invoc.*

|| De aquæ ductu.



the limits of a relative honour, such as is paid to a pure creature, we need be under no apprehension of exceeding either in our praise or in our respect to Mary. Mary has been honoured by God himself; by Jesus the Son of God she was not only honoured but obeyed; by him she has been exalted to a greatness, which all the greatness of men and Angels cannot equal; from being his lowly handmaid she has been exalted to the unparalleled dignity of being his mother. The structure of the heavens, the formation of the sun, moon, and stars, is by the Psalmist called the work of his fingers,\* but the exaltation of Mary was wrought by the might of his arm.¶ The Angel of God pronounced her blessed above all women, even before she had conceived by the virtue of the Holy Ghost. But since God has conferred that great and singular grace upon her, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call her blessed.

To these sublime prerogatives, which the bounteous hand of God heaped upon her,  
 Mary

\* Psalm. viii.

¶ Luke i.



Mary added the lustre of her own virtues. In this she shines the pattern and bright model of perfection. Such was Mary, says St. Ambrose,† that her life alone is a perfect pattern for all to copy from. In her example as in the brightest mirror we may see, what in our conduct we have to correct, what to avoid, and what to pursue. To other Saints, says St. Chrysologus,‡ God distributes his graces in certain portions, but on Mary he has conferred the plenitude of grace. Hence in grace and sanctity Mary is as far above all other Saints, as she is in dignity and rank. Who is she, that comes forth like the rising morn, says the spouse in the Canticles,§ fair as the moon, and chosen as the sun? She is the comely and the perfect one, in whom there is no spot. The virgin Mary, by a special privilege being ever exempt from the smallest blemish of sin, began from the very dawn of reason and so continued to shine with greater and still greater lustre in the eyes of her Creator, till he was pleased to take her from  
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† L. ii. de Virg.    ‡ Serm. lxiv.    § Cant. iv.

the earth and place her above the brightest luminaries of heaven.

The virtues of Mary therefore were more refined and pure than those of other mortals, because in her there was no stain of sin to blot or tarnish their lustre. When I treat of sin, says St. Augustin,\* I mean not to glance, even in the slightest manner, at the Virgin Mary, whom I always except, by reason of the honour and respect due to our Lord. Her patience, her conformity to the divine will, her obedience, her charity, her love of God, her humility, her purity of body and mind, have therefore a value and perfection in them, which belongs not to the virtues of other Saints. The Angel Gabriel at first sight declared her to be full of grace; he beheld her, as a rich vessel of election, replenished with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and adorned with every eminent virtue, which made her the most blessed even amongst the most holy of her sex.

Such was the chaste purpose of her soul, that she would not consent to become  
mother

\* De nat: et gra:

mother even to the word incarnate, till assured by the Angel, that it could and would be done without hurt to her virginal integrity. Upon that condition only she cautiously consented in words the most humble and submissive: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." So singular was her attachment to the virtue of virginity, so profound was her humility! Though upon the point of being raised to a dignity the most sublime, the most holy and divine, she still stiled herself the lowly handmaid of the Lord. Neither dazzled at the sight of her own superior excellence above all other pure creatures, nor elate at the thought of what the Holy Ghost had wrought within her, she humbly attributed all the virtues, all the graces, and all the greatness she possessed, to the sole power and liberality of the most High. He, that is the mighty, said she, hath done great things to me; holy is his name.†

Far from glorying in the unexampled privilege of her divine maternity, she would  
not

† Luke i.



not disclose it even to her spouse, although in danger of being dismissed by him on that account. The silent resignation of herself into the hands of Providence on that occasion appears no less wonderful to men, than it was acceptable to God. An Angel appeared to Joseph and revealed the secret mystery.\*

Mary no sooner had conceived, but an active zeal for God's honour and her neighbour's service prompted her to visit Elizabeth who at an advanced period of life was now six months gone with child. On her entering into the house of Zachary, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and the Baptist at the very sound of her voice was sanctified in his mother's womb. Her journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem at a time the most critical and inconvenient speaks not only an entire conformity to the will, but also an implicit obedience to the commands of God, which she acknowledged in the edict of Augustus. For her submission to the civil powers was ever sanctified by  
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\* Mat. i.



the purest motives of duty and religion. Her regular attendance in the Temple on the appointed festivals of the year is particularly noticed by the Evangelist.† How instructive and how numerous are the virtues she displayed in the single act of her purification? The law was merely ceremonial, and however binding it might be with respect to other mothers, it bound not the virgin mother of God, who was literally exempt.\* But to shun singularity and to give no cause of offence to the ignorant, Mary would plead no privilege, would insist on no interpretation in her favour, and alledge no excuse from the common ordinance. What troubles soon after, what afflictions, what trials of her faith and confidence had she not to undergo? What alarms from Herod's bloody designs against her Son, what perils from her sudden flight into Egypt, what apprehensions from the barbarous people of that inhospitable land? But over all these her patience triumphed, her faith and fortitude shone forth, like

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gold

† Luke i.

\* Lev. xii.

gold from the furnace, more bright and more precious.

On her return from Egypt she went back to her solitary retreat at Nazareth, where having the model of perfection constantly before her eyes, she at leisure practised all those eminent virtues, which became her exalted rank. Remote from the noise and hinderances of a vain world, she with silent, but with rapid steps advanced towards the summit of perfection according to that plenitude of grace, which already filled her soul. How totally estranged was her heart from all terrene affections, how wholly free from all vain desires, how sweetly fixed on God? Her sublime contemplation and knowledge of the eternal truths, her devout recollection of spirit, her eminent gift of prayer, her daily conversations with Jesus her divine Son kindled in her bosom so pure, so ardent and so constant a flame of holy love, as no seraphic love can equal.

But according to the sweet disposition of divine Providence, Mary's virtues had not yet received their final polish. Afflictions  
and

and sufferings, from some cause or other, are the usual portion of God's most cherished favourites. Such was the portion of Mary, such was the portion of Jesus Christ himself. Jesus no sooner entered upon the functions of a public life, than he experienced the most bitter persecutions, contradictions and slanders, that Jewish envy could heap upon him. Mary felt them all. The sufferings of the Son were inseparable from the feelings of the Mother. His pains were hers, his afflictions were hers. The depth of her afflictions, of her pains and sorrows can be only measured by the intenseness of her love. Her love was strong as death. She was witness to the scene of his bitter passion, and in her tender heart felt every cruel wound he received from the malice of his enraged enemies. She stood near the cross, on which he was nailed, mingling her tears with the blood, that streamed from his hands, feet, and side; she beheld him fainting in the agony of death, she saw him bow down his head and expire. Then it was that the sword  
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of grief, according to Simeon's prophecy, pierced through her very soul, and on that account she is justly stiled the Queen of Martyrs, as she is for her virtues the Queen of all Saints.

The glorious resurrection of Jesus from the dead renewed her joy again; but that joy at the end of forty days was damped again by his Ascension into Heaven. Such are the vicissitudes of human life, as long as it lasts. For though she could not but rejoice in spirit at his taking possession of that seat of bliss, which was due to his sacred humanity, yet his visible separation from her was undoubtedly a trial to the motherly feelings of her heart. If the desire of being with Christ was so strong in St. Paul as to make him wish for a speedy dissolution from the clog of his mortal body, how much more strong must have been the desire in Mary of being again united with her beloved Son? The accomplishment of her desire was for a while deferred, that she might give to the world a more lasting example of her patience and  
 submission



submission to the divine will. For whether she lived, or whether she died, she knew that she equally belonged to God. From the strong desire she had of being with her Jesus in his glory she died daily.

The long-expected day of her triumph at length came. Soft, as a gentle sleep, death closed her eyes. A splendid train of the heavenly Host stood ready to conduct her to the throne, which was placed for her reception above all the thrones of Heaven, such as became the Father, the king of eternal glory, to prepare for the Mother of his eternal Son. Mary, when on earth, demeaned herself as the humble handmaid of the Lord. In reward of her virtues she became the Mother of Jesus, and is now exalted above every pure creature in the kingdom of Heaven. Though of royal descent she was overlooked by the vain daughters of Juda. Concealed in a lowly cot at Nazareth, her virtues were neither known nor noticed in the world; but behold she is now called Blessed, and her name is honoured in every quarter of the globe.

globe. When living in the midst of a perverse people, she had great sorrows, great troubles and afflictions to undergo. She bore them, as was meet, with an entire resignation to the divine appointments; they ended soon. But of the immense weight of glory, which they wrought in her, and of the unspeakable bliss, which she now enjoys in heaven, there will be no end.

Heaven, my Brethren, is the place we have been created for. It is the place of consummate happiness, the centre of all good without the mixture of any evil. In whatever happiness we rest exclusive of that, is a false happiness. Deluded mortals often place their happiness in earthly enjoyments, in sensual gratifications and worldly pursuits, unmindful of their Christian duties and forgetful of their last end. Death will soon break the delusive charm. Their eyes will then shut to the fleeting vanities of a deceitful world, and the boundless scene of eternity will open to their view. Past enjoyments, past honours, and past possessions, shall be no more than an empty shade.

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• Their works alone shall accompany them  
beyond the grave. Happy they, and only  
they, whose works shall be found full in the  
fight of God.

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